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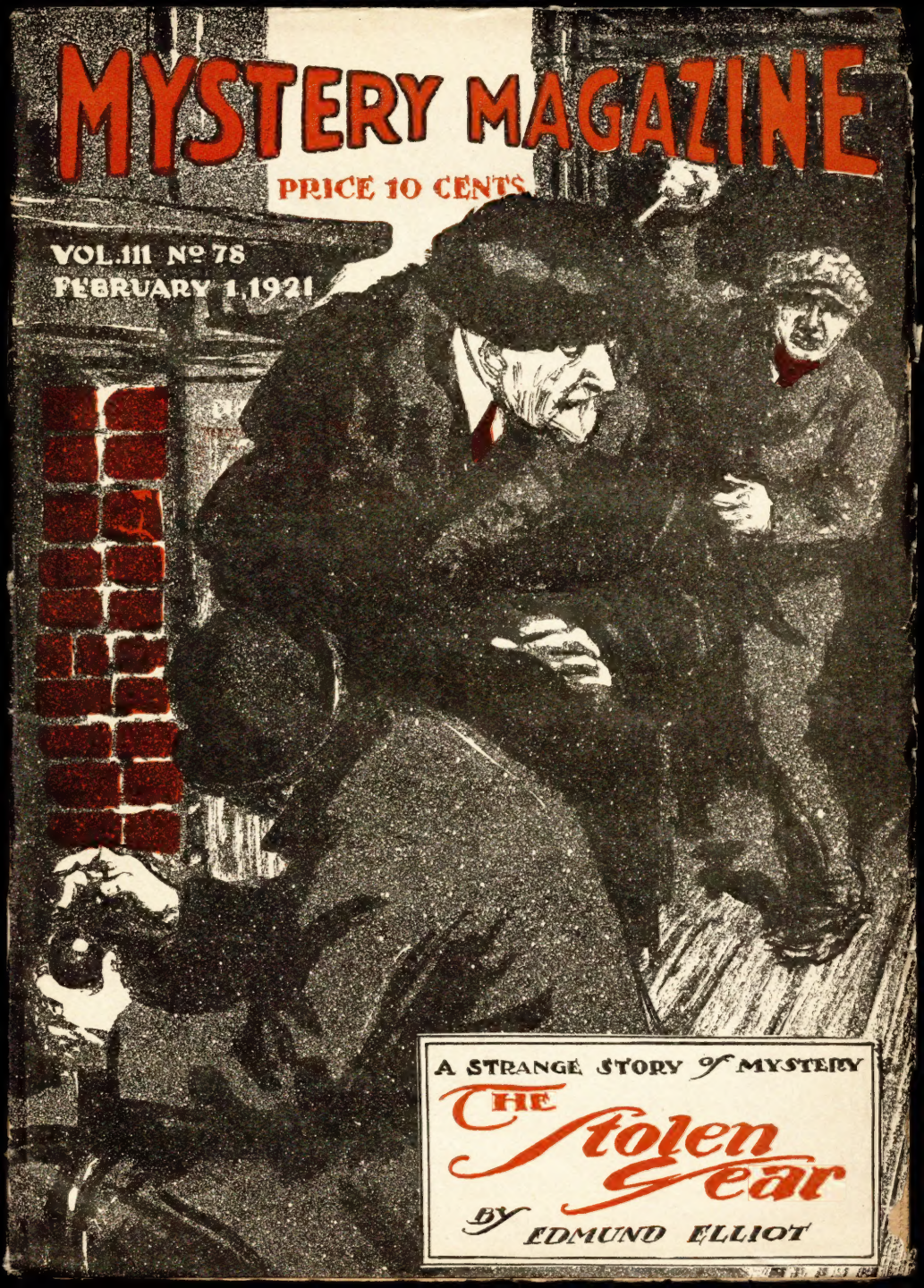

A STRANGE STORY of MYSTERY

The Stolen Year

BY EDMUND ELLIOT

Watch for "The Affair At Hollywood House," by Wm. H. Kofoed, in our next issue.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE STOLEN YEAR

By EDMUND ELLIOT

CHAPTER ONE

NEW YEAR'S EVE

THE year 1910 was dying.

The great clock in the spire of Old Trinity had proclaimed the beginning of the last year of its life, and already, above the hilarious roar of the deliriously joyous multitude that swarmed the streets, the hoarse scream of impatient whistles began to be heard, dwarfing the shriller blasts of tin horns and the blatant whir of rattles.

From the tall stained-glass windows of the church rays of multi-colored light fell across the ancient tombstones, and from within, scarcely audible above the pandemonium without, yet piercing it, running through it like the theme of a mighty orchestration, floated the solemn tones of the organ, now low and soft, scarce more than a vibration, now rising, swelling in wondrous chords of pure harmony.

Berkeley Creston left the Subway at Wall Street, and pushing his way with difficulty through the laughing, jostling crowd, walked up confetti-strewn Broadway, took a position against the iron rail that surrounded the churchyard, and glanced up at the clock. The hands pointed to twenty minutes of midnight.

In five minutes the great bells, that with joyous brazen tongue had rung out and in so many, many years would chime once more the requiem of the passing and a pean to the new-born year.

It was Creston's first New Year in New York, and the wild, unrestrained mirth and terrific din of the vast throngs amused him and helped to lighten for the time his own heavy burden of trouble.

Since early evening he had wandered among the crowds, with but not of them, seeing but not in the least understanding the spirit that makes this carnival night of the metropolis one of the strangest nights of the year.

A city gone mad it seemed to him, a bacchanalian revel with five million participants.

Uptown he had felt more than once a half hysterical desire to plunge recklessly into the vortex of madness about him, but here in the dim canyons of the business district, with the soft glow from the windows of the church, and the low, solemn tones of the organ, a strange feeling of peace pervaded him, and he leaned against the railing, looking up between the cliff-like sides of the great office buildings to the meagre streak of purple, star-strewn sky above.

For some moments he stood thus lost in thought, oblivious of the noisy crowd about him, but gradually a vague uneasiness took possession of him; he felt that some one was looking at him intently.

It is not an uncommon phenomenon, this half-subconscious realization that one is being stared at, but in this case there seemed to Berkeley to be something malign about the scrutiny.

He moved a little uneasily and looked about, but no one appeared to be paying the least attention to him, and he was about to move away when he heard his name pronounced—"Creston!"

It was scarcely more than a whisper, but clear and bell-like in tone, with a distinct note of authority in it.

Berkeley paused, startled. He had no friends, few acquaintances in the city, indeed in the East, and, too, this voice was strange. He hesitated.

"Turn, Creston!"

The voice was a little louder, a little more authoritative, and Creston reluctantly, almost against his will, obeyed. Slowly he faced about, gripping the iron fence with both hands and peering through the bars into the churchyard, but in the dimness he could distinguish nothing.

"Look!" spoke the commanding voice, and at the word a single ray of light sprang from the darkness and flashed squarely into Creston's eyes.

It might have been the reflection from a diamond, or a pin-point opening in an electric pocket-lamp, Creston could not make out; indeed he did not try; a curious numbness oppressed him; he tried to drag his eyes from the brilliant point of light, but could not.

The noise of the crowd about, the roar of the whistles, the soft minor chords of the organ grew dim and far away.

As in a dream he heard the great chimes ring out above him, but they seemed to come from a vast distance. Only that tiny point remained, glowing, growing, absorbing his consciousness.

Then suddenly it went out with a snap. Sound poured back upon him in a deafening flood, while above the great chimes pealed forth their brazen requiem to the dying year.

For a moment, dazed and a little dizzy, Creston clung to the iron fence; then, with a shake of his shoulders, he turned once more towards the closely packed crowd.

"Well, that's the limit," he muttered. "If I can go to sleep in this howling mob I must be pretty well done up. Home—well, the flat for mine. There's a bed there, anyway."

It took him a good ten minutes to worm his way through the dense crowd, but at last he won across the street to the uptown subway kiosk, and presently was seated in a train roaring north.

He had bought a paper, a late evening edition, from a boy at the subway entrance, and more from habit than any desire to read he opened it and began glancing in a desultory, uninterested way over the headlines.

He read for a few minutes mechanically, paying little attention to the subject matter of the articles, but presently he became vaguely aware that something was wrong; the various news items in themselves were clear enough, but something was lacking, there was something strange that he could not make out.

He was a regular reader of the papers, buying several every day and making it a point to keep well abreast of the times, but in this one there recurred again and again references to things he knew nothing about.

Had the boy stuck him with an old paper? He glanced at the date line. No, the date was right—December thirty-first, nineteen hundred and—what? His heart almost stopped beating, and with a smothered exclamation he half sprang to his feet, but sank back trembling and dazed, believing he must have made a mistake, but it was there plainly enough—December thirty-first, nineteen hundred and eleven. Not ten, eleven!

What did it mean? Could it possibly be a misprint? Rapidly he scanned the sheets, examining the date lines of all out-of-town news items—they were each and all dated 1911.

Without apology he leaned forward and looked at his neighbor's paper—an entirely different publication. It, too, was dated 1911.

The man on his other side was reading a magazine. Creston touched him on the arm. "What—would you mind telling me the date of that magazine?" he asked hoarsely.

The stranger looked at him curiously.

"Sure. Christmas number—December," he replied.

"But—but the year?"

"Great Scott, this year of course—I'm no back number, my friend—1911."

"Is it nineteen hundred and eleven—this year?" persisted Creston almost pleadingly. "Are you sure?"

The other looked at him again and grinned tolerantly.

"Well," he said, drawing out his watch, "if you want to be so almighty accurate, it's been 1912 just about four minutes."

Creston said nothing more. His brain was in a whirl. What did it mean? What had happened to him? When he had left the subway at Wall Street, half an hour before, it had been December thirty-first, nineteen hundred and ten. He was positive of that. There was no doubt whatever. Now it was January, nineteen hundred and twelve. There seemed to be no doubt of that, either.

What, then, in heaven's name, had become of 1911?

CHAPTER TWO

AT THE FLAT

MORE by instinct than by any exercise of conscious will, Creston left the subway at the station nearest his modest three-room flat well uptown.

He was still dazed, and not a little frightened, at this weird thing that had happened to him, but though of a nervous, high-strung temperament, he had a foundation of hard common sense and a logical and to a certain extent analytical mind, and as soon as the first shock of his startling discovery had worn off he began to use it.

Aphasia was a strange and to the lay mind at least an inexplicable condition, but it was by no means an uncommon one. He had read of more than one man who had suddenly and without any apparent reason lost his memory entirely, and for far longer periods than one year.

But the curious thing was that he should recover consciousness at the precise place and hour that he lost it.

Another amazing thing, too, was that he wore apparently the same suit of clothes, overcoat and even shoes, and so far as he could discover they were in precisely as good condition as when he had donned them on the morning of the last day of 1910.

Furthermore an inventory of his pockets revealed exactly the same articles that he had possessed on that day—neither more nor less.

He seldom smoked cigarettes, but he remembered that just before taking the subway at Twenty-third street he had purchased a pack and smoked one. The pack was still in his pocket, minus one of the little cork-tipped health destroyers.

His watch, simple jewelry, and small amount of money were all intact, even his handkerchief, a fancy silk one that had been given to him, was in its place.

It was uncanny, far more so than if he had awakened under totally strange conditions and in some far-off place; indeed, the circumstances surrounding his return to the normal were all that made the case extraordinary.

"Well," he muttered as he mounted the steps of the subway to the street and started toward his flat three blocks away, "I'll dig up that letter of introduction I never presented from Doctor Carter to his old classmate, Delaine, and see what he has to say. He's in the alienist line, I believe."

He had reached the apartment house where he had his flat, and was about to put the key in the door when a sudden appalling thought struck him, and he paused with an exclamation of dismay.

Did he still live there? Under the ordinary circumstances of this extraordinary disease—if it was a disease—the chances would be very much against it, but as it was——

He was still hesitating, not at all desirous of walking unannounced at one o'clock in the morning into some stranger's rooms, and equally averse either to parting with a portion of his small capital for a hotel room or spending the rest of the night in the street, when the sound of slightly unsteady footsteps approaching attracted his attention, and the next moment a big, red-faced man entered the vestibule and peered suspiciously at him.

In the dim light that came through the glass door from the low-turned gas in the inner hall Creston recognized the janitor, a burly but good-natured Irishman, with whom he had been something of a favorite for some inexplicable reason, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Hello, Murphy!" he said with as much nonchalance as he could command. "My flat still here?"

Murphy stooped and stared at him.

"Glory be!" he exclaimed. "If it ain't Misther Creston himself! An' where have ye been th' year, sor? Sure it's th' divil's own time ye friends do be afther havin' tryin' to find ye."

Creston felt that he was beyond being surprised at anything that happened, nevertheless his eyes opened with amazement at this statement—he did not know he had any friends—but he let the question pass for the moment. The main thing was where he was to rest, for he was beginning to feel the strain of his experience and to realize he was in a state bordering on physical as well as mental exhaustion.

"How about the flat?" he repeated. "Do I—is it rented?"

"Rented is it?" queried Murphy, plainly surprised at the question. "An' why th' divil should it be rented more than it is to you, when yer money orders have been comin' month an' month as reg'lar as Uncle Paddy's drunks? Sure it's just as ye left it, sor, an' th' missus do be afther dustin' up every week fer ye. Nothin' at all has been touched, sor, not even," he added suggestively, "th' bottle of whisky in the medicine-chist in th' bathroom."

Before the janitor had finished Creston had opened the door and was leading the way toward the stairs.

"Good," he said. "Come on up, Murphy, and have a New Year's drink, I—I believe I need one myself."

As Murphy had said, nothing had been touched, and when Berkeley lighted the gas in the familiar little rooms it seemed impossible to realize that twelve months had elapsed since he had left them, instead of the five or six hours, which were all that he could account for.

One thing, however, attracted his attention, and that was four huge piles of newspapers stacked on the floor of his sitting-room.

"Yer papers, sor," Murphy explained in answer to his question, "a whole year of 'em, a mornin' an' a evenin' of every day an' a fine time ye'll have readin' of 'em I'm thinkin'. Did they have no papers where ye was, sor, that you do be havin' to git me to save 'em up fer ye?"

"Did I tell you to keep them?" asked Creston wearily.

Murphy looked at him curiously.

"Yez wrote me to," he replied. "An' sint th' money each month wid th' rint. But I'm afther thinkin' ye're all in, Misther Creston. Sure ye look fair sick, sor. I'd be gittin' to bed av I was ye. I'll jist be afther takin' me nip an' leavin' ye in peace."

But worn out as he was, Creston was not yet ready to let the man go.

Wait a minute, Murphy," he said, sinking into a chair; "pour me out a drink like a good fellow and then sit down for a bit."

And Murphy obeyed, nothing loath.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SPY

"AND now tell me," went on Creston when they were comfortably seated. "Who are these friends who have been so worried about me? And if they were so worried why didn't they write to me?"

"Sure now, how could they write whin ye gave no address. Ye only wrote me th' onct—th' day afther New Year's a year ago it were I got it—about takin' care of yer flat an' th' newspapers, an' afther that th' money orders came without words."

"Eh—to be sure," began Creston hesitatingly. He wanted to question the man, but it was difficult to frame his questions so that he would not arouse the janitor's curiosity. "Eh! Couldn't they tell where I was from the postmarks?"

"They could," returned Murphy dryly. "And a slather of good it did 'em. They was each an' every one postmarked from New York City, an' from a different part of it each time. Th' lawyer man from Ohio has them all—Martin his name is."

"Martin—Judge Martin—my uncle's lawyer?" exclaimed Creston. "What the dickens did he want?"

"He wanted to find ye, I'm thinkin'," returned Murphy. "An' wasn't no ways partic'lar what it cost wid his ads. in every paper in th' States an' Canada, an' a lot of these private detective fellers, too. Glory be, he were set on findin' ye. Not till yesterday mornin' did he give up, an' then he says to me, 'It's all off, Murphy,' says he; 'it's too late now. If he comes back,' says he, 'tell him he's made a damn fool of hisself—an' me.'"

Creston shook his head perplexedly. He could not understand it.

"Who else came?" he asked after a moment's futile speculation as to the meaning of his uncle's lawyer's sudden interest.

"Well, now," replied Murphy, "there was a lot of 'em. Besides the lawyer man an' his private cops, there was a lot of fellers that worked in that newspaper office wit ye, an' there was a Doctor Hartley Delaine, who kinder bossed things fer th' lawyer man when he was home tendin' to his other business, an' then th' las' six months there's been a colleen——"

"Elsa—Miss Lavine!" exclaimed Creston excitedly. "Yes—of course she would be home by now—what—what did she say?"

Murphy saw that he had made an impression and improved the opportunity to mix himself another nip.

"Sure, 'tis the sweet mouth she has fer sayin' things, sor," he replied, having disposed of the drink, "but small use did she make of it. But her big gray eyes did a deal of tellin' tales out o' school. I'm thinkin', 'tis a lucky man ye are, Misther Creston."

Berkeley would have given another year of his life to hear more, but he could not very well question the janitor about Elsa, so he changed the subject.

"Any one else?" he asked a little shortly.

"One feller—a black sassanach of an orangeman, bad cess to him, wit' th' eye of th' divil an' a scar like a knife cut on his temple. He come twiced, wantin' to come up here a-lookin' fer clues. I put him off an' told th' doctor man, Misther Martin bein' away. 'He's a bad un,' says he. 'Av he comes agin, Murphy,' says he, 'kick him out. He means no good to Misther Creston if he is his cousin.'"

For the second time Creston showed excitement.

"Dick Brant!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "Was it Brant, Murphy?"

"That's th' name av him," replied Murphy; "he come agin th' next day wid a mouth full of soft words an' a fist full of bills, but—he wint out agin. An' now I must be goin', sor, or th' missus'll have her hands in me wool—an' I've none too much of it. Good-night, sor. It's glad I am that ye're back."

This time Creston allowed the man to go and slowly prepare for bed; but weary to the point of absolute exhaustion as he was sleep held off, and presently turning out the gas, he walked to the

window and raised the shade. It was after two, but for some moments she stood staring out on the deserted street, and up at the cold winter sky, but in neither could he read the answer to his perplexities, and he was about to turn back to bed when from the shadow of a doorway opposite two men stepped out.

One was so muffled in a fur coat and an automobile cap that face and figure were alike concealed; but the other, in the light of a street-lamp, his face turned up toward the window was plainly visible.

He was a tall, slender man, with a dark, evilly handsome face, and even at the distance Creston could see the gleam of a long white scar upon his temple.

Quickly he slipped behind the curtains, but the man apparently had not seen that he was observed, for he made no attempt to conceal his face, though the two stood talking for several minutes, and presently they shook hands, laughing as if well pleased with themselves; then the muffled men walked rapidly away and the other, after standing staring up at Creston's window for a moment, turned and slowly re-entered the vestibule; but whether he went into the house or was merely concealed in the shadow of the doorway, Berkeley could not tell.

For some time Creston stood staring after him, but the spy did not reappear, and at last with a weary sigh he turned again toward his bed.

"What is it?" he murmured plaintively. "What is the meaning of all this mystery—and what is that beast Dick Brant doing watching my window at two in the morning?"

CHAPTER FOUR

A SOCIETY NOTE FROM PARIS

IT was nearly noon when Creston awoke, rested and refreshed physically, but sorely disturbed mentally. Indeed, now that he had time to think he realized even more keenly than he had the night before the grotesque horror of his position.

A year of his life had passed, and he had not the remotest clue to what he had done with it, how it had been spent. He might have become a criminal—for all he knew, a murderer. Perhaps—perhaps he had married. And this seemed worst of all, for there—was Elsa.

There was but one thing to do: see Doctor Delaine, and see him before he saw any one else. He was a specialist in mental diseases, and he would be particularly interested in his case, even though he—Creston—was practically penniless, for the doctor had come originally from his home town in Ohio, and was a friend and chum of his best friend, Doctor Carter.

Possibly he would be able to restore his memory of the happenings of the last year; but it was now only about noon and Delaine, he remembered Carter had told him, was home only before ten and after four.

So after breakfast at a near-by restaurant he returned to his rooms and began going over the pile of newspapers Murphy had saved for him.

It was a tedious job, but not without certain interest, this reading of "news" that to every one else had become history, but his personal affairs so fully absorbed his thought that he could not keep his mind upon the printed page.

But one article which he stumbled on by accident claimed his undivided attention, and he read it twice, frowning and muttering angrily.

"It was in the gossipy society section of a late April Sunday paper and bore a Paris date line, and only that a certain well-known name caught his eye he would have passed it over.

"Among the well-known Americans who sailed from Havre on the *La Fleche* on Wednesday last were Mrs. Sidney Courtlandt and her daughter, Miss Elsa Lavine. Miss Lavine was one of the most beautiful of last season's débutantes in New York, but on account of Mrs. Courtlandt's health has spent the past winter in the south of France. Mr. Richard Brant, the nephew and heir of the late Henry Berkeley Creston, millionaire grain man of Cleveland, who died last December, was also a member of the Lavine party, and rumor hath it that for some months he has not wandered far from the immediate vicinity of the fair Miss Elsa.

"It was believed at one time that another nephew of the late Mr. Creston was to be the envied man, but an unfortunate quarrel with his uncle—due it is understood to his adoption of New York as a home and literature as a career, both of which the eccentric old gentleman held to be the invention of the devil—cut off his income, and led to his final disinheritance.

"Where the unfortunate young man is now is not known, but his handsome and fascinating cousin is very much in evidence, and it is hinted by the socially wise that an engagement will shortly be announced."

"Brant!" growled Berkeley savagely. "By heaven, he isn't fit to speak to any woman or man either. Disinherited or not, I'll——"

A ring at the door interrupted him, and still frowning darkly he strode through the little hall and opened it.

But it was not Murphy who stood there as he supposed, but a tall, heavily built man of dignified carriage and grave manner; his massive head, covered by thick, short hair shot with gray, was wonderfully shaped; a gray Van Dyke beard covered but could not conceal the iron jaw and straight hard mouth, while his eyes, blue as chilled steel and quite as cold, were by turns dead and as expressionless as a basilik and keen as the flashing point of a Toledo rapier.

He smiled grimly as he looked at the still glowering Creston; then, removing the fur cap he wore, he stepped into the tiny hall.

"Well, young man," he said, and his voice while harsh was not unpleasant, "so you have seen fit to return from the unknown. I see you do not recognize me," he added before Creston could reply. "I am Doctor Delaine, to whom I understand you have a letter of introduction from my friend John Carter, which apparently you did not consider worth while delivering."

CHAPTER FIVE

DOCTOR HARTLEY DELAINE

THE length of the doctor's speech had enabled Creston to shake off the chilling repulsion with which his visitor had first impressed him.

There was something, too, vaguely and disquietingly familiar about the man; his features, to be sure, were those of a stranger, but the impression that he had seen him somewhere before and under unpleasant circumstances forced itself upon him.

However, by the time the doctor finished Berkeley had himself well in hand.

"I am delighted to see you, doctor," he said easily, leading the way to his little living-room. "I did not present Jack's letter, because—well, you probably understand as well as I. I had several letters to influential men in different circles, but I did not use them. I did not choose to ask favors of my friend's friends."

The doctor nodded a non-committal assent.

"But you spoke of my return from the 'unknown,'" continued Creston. "As a matter of fact that is literally what I have done, and I was about to call upon you in reference to it—professionally."

Doctor Delaine raised his shaggy eyebrows slightly, and took the chair Creston offered.

"It is as well that I happened to come, then," he said. "I stopped to ask Murphy if you had been heard from yet, as I have done every few days, by request of your uncle's executor, Judge Martin, and he informed me you were home."

In a very few words Creston told his story. It did not take long, though he told it in detail, for to him it was the history of only a few hours.

When he had finished the doctor sat for a few minutes staring at him, his uncanny eyes as cold and expressionless as those of a fish.

"As an exemplification of the always more or less erratic phenomena of so-called aphasia, your case is absolutely unique," he said at last. "The question of the condition of mind that caused you to pass out of and again into a state of conscious existence under the bizarre circumstances you describe is a wholly scientific one, provided that condition was not induced by some one for purposes of their own, in which case we should have to look at the matter from a lay viewpoint as well. From the viewpoint, say, of the detective as well as the scientist."

Creston looked at him somewhat startled and a good deal astonished.

"It is not an impossible theory," added the doctor, noting his look. "Certainly one man had an excellent motive for removing you for a year."

"You mean?" Creston asked quickly.

"I mean, young man, that, as you know, by your uncle's will your cousin Richard Brant was left fifty thousand dollars cash and an income of twenty thousand a year for life only. The remainder of the estate—amounting to some ten millions of dollars—less some insignificant legacies—became yours absolutely—*provided* that within one year from the day the terms of this testament were communicated to you, you took up your residence upon the old Creston place and signed a sworn agreement to live there at least six months of every year and to give up every form of journalism, otherwise the entire estate would revert to the first legatee, your cousin Richard Brant?"

"But, good heaven, you don't mean to imply——" exclaimed Creston.

"One moment," interrupted Delaine. "There was as you remember a further and very wise provision that if Brant by any overt act attempted to interfere with your performance of the conditions and failed, he would receive but twenty-five thousand in cash and ten thousand a year. If he attempted and succeeded his legacy would go to you and the remainder of the estate be divided equally between twenty colleges to be selected by the executors."

"Then——" began Creston, but the other continued placidly:

"Further, if within the year you should decease from any cause whatever, the colleges took everything, and still further, if you should comply with the conditions and inherit, then at your death, no matter when or from what cause, Brant's income ceases absolutely and forever."

He held up a silencing hand as Berkeley again attempted to speak.

"It is evident therefore that it would be a very dangerous thing for Brant to interfere with you in any way. As to your life, he must guard it as a mother would her only child; his financial life depends on it. A shrewd man your uncle, Mr. Creston."

For a moment Creston looked at the doctor, too bewildered to speak.

"I fear," he said at last, "that I do not quite catch your drift. I thought at first you were suggesting that Brant was in some way responsible for my condition—but it seems that you have proved pretty conclusively that he could not be."

Again the doctor's straight lips curved in his cold, inscrutable smile.

"That is your conclusion, not mine," he said.

"I draw none. I simply call your attention to the fact that you have lost and Brant won all. Likewise to the curious coincidence that you disappeared upon the day your uncle's will reached you and return precisely one year later to the minute.

"Also to the—from a scientific point—impossible conditions surrounding that phenomenal and very convenient attack of aphasia."

"Do I then understand you to imply that Brant by some occult means is responsible for my failure to comply with the extraordinary conditions of my uncle's will?"

"I imply nothing, Creston," replied the doctor. "I merely state facts. Ten millions is a big stake. A beautiful girl is a big stake—to some men. Both together are worth considerable risk."

"If by a beautiful girl you mean Miss Lavine, the fact that the man she married had ten millions or ten cents would be a matter of total indifference," said Creston stiffly.

"Possibly," returned the doctor quietly, "even probable in this case, but parents are seldom so indifferent—especially stepfathers."

And Creston, knowing that he spoke the truth, writhed inwardly.

"But—how—how?" he asked impatiently, reverting to the less unpleasant subject. "Brant is no Machiavelli. He has low cunning, trickery—he's smooth, but——"

"Did you ever hear of hypnotism?" suggested the doctor softly.

Creston laughed harshly.

"Hypnotism!" he jeered. "Great Scott! Dick Brant couldn't hypnotize a sick jack-rabbit, much less a grown man!"

"There are men who could," observed the doctor smoothly, the rapier glint showing for a moment in his mask-like eyes; "men whose power is for sale, too—for a few dollars perhaps, much less a million—or two—possibly five. It would be a good bargain for Brant even at that rate."

"But—but, good heavens," stammered Creston, paling at the recollection of the commanding voice in the churchyard and the mysterious ray of light, "a man can't be kept hypnotized for a year."

"Let us suppose a case," returned Delaine. "Your uncle dies; after the funeral the will is read to the only heir on the spot, Brant, and a copy mailed to you registered. Brant catches the fastest train to New York, beating the mail by several hours.

"This much is fact, for Judge Martin, as soon as he learned that Brant had started for New York, immediately after learning from him that the will was to be mailed to you at once, became suspicious of his intentions and wrote to me, asking me to keep an eye on you. Unfortunately I did not get the letter until too late.

"But to return to Brant and his supposititious actions. He does not know just what he is going to do, but perhaps he has a friend who carries a little more mental horsepower than he. He goes to him for advice and gets it. In the shadow of the opposite house he watches your door, sees the postman come, ring and cry your name in the hall, as they do in these cheap apartments. You come down, sign and take your registered letter. The year has begun to run.

"Opportunity is all that is needed now; it comes at twenty minutes of twelve before old Trinity. Your mind, drifting, is unguarded; the moment is seized. You succumb. And then what easier to convey you to some quiet place, change your clothes, bring you to and keep you there.

"What harm if you rave and roar at first? The walls are thick or the place isolated; they would see to that. Then when the year is up again you are hypnotized, your clothes replaced, you are commanded by the one who controls your mind—absolutely—to forget; wash your memory clean of all that has happened from the time the light flashed in your eyes from Trinity churchyard at twenty minutes of twelve December thirty-first, nineteen hundred and ten, until it flashes again at the same day, month and hour in nineteen hundred and eleven. You obey, because you must, and a year has been stolen from your life."

Creston rose and paced the small room with clinched hands.

"If I believed that," he cried bitterly, "I'd take Dick Brant by the throat and choke a confession——"

"Ah!" interrupted the doctor suavely, "and now we come to the real object of all my suppositions? I knew you for a shrewd man, Creston, if Judge Martin's judgment is to be trusted. I realized that sooner or later, with or without the assistance of some one else, you would arrive at some such explanation as I have tried to give. And arriving at it yourself, you would see the futility of striving against fate. You have nothing against Brant. Think! Appreciate the folly of telling a tale of that kind to the world.

"You would get what? Justice? No. Only ridicule, contempt and probably a cell in a lunatic asylum. I will be frank. I believe this is really the explanation of your strange adventure; more, I believe I know the man whose brain devised the scheme and assisted Brant in its execution. But I can prove nothing—neither of us can. Their tracks are buried with your dead memory. I do not advise you to accept your ill-fortune without a struggle, but it is foolish to fight without weapons. Do nothing openly until you get them. Don't let your enemy know you suspect him.

"I leave you to think it over, my friend. Come and see me to-morrow."

"Who is the man you believe to be Brant's accomplice?" asked Creston as Delaine reached for his cap.

The doctor hesitated.

"I do not think I will tell you—yet," he said slowly. "It is merely a suspicion at the best; indeed it is only since I heard your story that I connected him with the case at all. I had put

Brant's intimacy at his house down to an entirely different cause. However, it is possible I may decide to tell you by to-morrow. Come at three o'clock. Good-by!"

He rose as he spoke, and with a slight bow left the flat, leaving Creston almost crushed by the weight of his misfortune, but suddenly he sprang up. "Foolish to fight without weapons?" he exclaimed. "Perhaps it is, but it's better than giving up without a struggle. I'll fight, by heaven! I'll——"

He strode to the window and looked out into the shabby street below. A big limousine stood at the curb, and even as he watched the doctor came out of the house.

He had his fur cap on now, and from the car he took a heavy fur overcoat and put it on, turning the collar up about his ears, for it was bitterly cold.

Looking at him thus arrayed, Creston gasped, gripping the window-ledge with both hands.

"It is!" he muttered hoarsely. "By all the Imps of Satan, it's the man who stood there with Richard Brant at two o'clock this morning."

CHAPTER SIX

THE TRIP TO THE COUNTRY

WITH Creston action, as a rule, followed quickly on the heels of decision, but in this case for the first time in his life he found himself at a loss what to do.

He felt bound hand and foot. That Doctor Delaine was in reality Brant's accomplice, that he had told the story of the stolen year exactly as it had happened, he felt absolutely certain.

He believed, too, that Delaine expected, intended him to guess the truth, and that his remark about lunatic asylums was in fact a thinly veiled threat.

But the more he thought of it the more impregnable seemed the conspirator's position. If he accused them privately, their answer might well be a brazen "What are you going to do about it?" If publicly it was probably, yes practically, certain that only ridicule if not actual confinement as a lunatic would be his portion.

He had, as Delaine had said, received the will on the afternoon of December thirty-first—though he had read little beyond the paragraph relating to himself, and did not remember the provisions made to protect him from annoyance or worse, from Brant—and it was the thought of giving up New York and his chosen career that had sent him out to wander with the New Year merry-makers. For he had no intention of giving up the millions.

He was a level-headed chap, and he realized very well that they would support Elsa very much better than he could ever hope to with his pen. Not that she would care particularly, but he knew Mr. Sidney Courtlandt, and was aware that he ruled his gentle wife like a Turk, and through fear for her mother he to a certain extent controlled Elsa, too.

But though he had every intention of making a fight to the finish for his lost inheritance, he had not the remotest idea how to begin, so after a half-hour of futile effort to formulate some plan of action he gave it up for the time being, deciding to wait and see what his interview the next day with Doctor Delaine brought forth.

He had called up the Courtlandt house while out for his breakfast, but the butler had informed him rather indefinitely that the family was out of town for the holidays, though Mr. Courtlandt was expected back the next day.

He had not the least notion where to find Dick Brant, and so far as Delaine was concerned he had decided to turn that gentleman's own advice against himself, and not "let his enemy know that he suspected him."

So having nothing else to do, he turned again to the newspapers, and for an hour or so waded conscientiously through the daily records of the stolen year; then a sharp ring at the bell interrupted him.

"Now who the deuce can that be?" he muttered as he rose, walked into the kitchen, and sent a rather ungracious "Hello" down the tube that led to the vestibule of the old-fashioned flat-house.

"That you, Creston?" came back the voice of his late visitor.

"This is Doctor Delaine. Get your coat and hat and come downstairs. I want you to take a little ride with me—into the country—Westchester county way. I have an idea we may learn something."

"All right," replied Creston, after a momentary hesitation, "I'll be with you in a minute.

"Now what's up?" he added to himself as he slipped on his overcoat. "I wonder if this is the prelude to another mysterious disappearance on my part. Anyway, he'll have to use some more concrete force than hypnotism this time—and a good deal of it," he added grimly as he placed a very business-like automatic pistol in his pocket.

He found the doctor wrapped in his big fur coat, seated in the tonneau of a huge six-cylinder, uncovered French touring-car with a small red cross on the front of the bonnet.

Beside the chauffeur sat a third man, a big, square-shouldered fellow, with a derby hat on his round bullet-head, a heavy mustache and small keen eyes.

"Jump in here," said the doctor hurriedly. "Go on, Pierre, and waste no time. I want to get there before dark if possible. Put a rug around your shoulders if you're cold," he added to Creston.

"The limousine would have been warmer," returned Berkeley with a shiver as a chill blast of wind struck him.

"And slower," replied the doctor; "this car has legs, and these winter days are short."

And indeed, though scarcely four o'clock, the sun was already low in the west.

Creston nodded slightly toward the man beside the chauffeur.

"Footman?" he asked with a grin.

"Bluff," returned the doctor, smiling at the evidently absurd question.

"I'll tell you," he added, after a moment's silence; "I've been doing some thinking since I left you this afternoon and a little investigating. The man your story led me to suspect—his wife has been a patient of mine for years—as Brant's possible accomplice, owns beside his city home, Newport cottage and shooting-lodge in the Adirondacks, a place on Long Island and another in Westchester county, and it struck me that he might have utilized one of the unoccupied places as your prison.

"Now his family live in the New York house, and were at the Newport place and the lodge this summer. The Long Island place I found was rented to a well-known man and had been for some years; there remained only the Westchester county house."

"And that is where we are going?" asked Creston.

"Precisely. I called up the local real estate agent, and learned that the place had been vacant for a year and a half. For the first six months, that is until the first of last year, it had been in the agent's hands for rent; then the owner decided he would not rent after all, took the keys from the agent and put in caretakers, a man and wife. Yesterday afternoon the owner again put the place into the hands of the agent."

"By George!" exclaimed Creston. "That certainly looks suspicious."

But privately Delaine's conduct struck him as still more extraordinary. What was he up to? Was all this apparent interest merely an elaborate bluff to calm any suspicion he—Creston—might have, or was it another trap?

The first did not seem probable in view of the man's character and the tenor of his conversation on his first visit to Creston.

The second he could see no earthly reason for. The plot had been a first-class success. He—Creston—had failed to comply with the terms of the will, and was a pauper. Dick Brant was the legal heir.

What further use could they have for him unless—instinctively Creston's hand sought his overcoat pocket and clasped the reassuring butt of the automatic—unless having won, having produced him after the year had expired and his inheritance lost, they now intended to make all secure by seeing that he disappeared—forever.

Possibly this move was the outcome of his recent interview with the doctor, when he had shown by his manner and distinctly said that he intended to fight to a finish.

Well, he would, and he added to himself grimly—if it were his finish he wouldn't finish alone!

"What about him?" he asked, suddenly nodding toward the man on the front seat.

"He's one of the detectives we had looking for you," replied the doctor. "My idea is that you shall face these caretakers, pretending to remember all about your imprisonment. I believe that your mere appearance there will frighten them, and that if you threaten them with arrest—with the detective posing as a Central Office man, to back you—we may be able to get a full confession, implicating the real rascals."

"Sounds feasible," admitted Creston, "if——"

He did not finish the sentence, but leaned back in the car pondering deeply, and as their speed had increased so that conversation was difficult little more was said.

The sun had set, but it was still light when they reached the agent's house in the little village on the Hudson, and almost before the car had stopped he came out to them, a bunch of keys in his hand.

"Glad to meet you, doctor," he said genially; "know you by reputation of course. I've got to apologize, though. You see, being New Year's day, I've got a house full of guests here, and I can't very well leave, and I find that rascally caretaker has cleared out; seems he stopped here and left the keys this morning while I was out, and my wife forgot to tell me. But if you wouldn't mind going over the house alone, I'll send a boy with you to guide you——"

But the doctor cut him short, assuring him the arrangement was perfectly satisfactory, but as he knew the country he would not need the guide, and fifteen minutes later they stopped before the big iron gates in the high fence that surrounded the place beyond which, through the leafless trees they caught occasional glimpses of a huge old-fashioned mansion of gray stone, set back from the road.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AT THE HOUSE

LEAVING the chauffeur and the detective in the car, Delaine and Creston descended and, unlocking the rusty padlock that secured them, passed through the gates, the former carrying one of the big lamps of the car.

"Ideal spot for the purpose," remarked the doctor, "not a house within half a mile and practically invisible from the road."

"Scarcely worth while going there now that the caretakers have gone, is it?" asked Creston; "it looks as if your scheme had fallen through."

"May as well go over the house, though," replied Delaine, "if you were there for a year you may have left some trace."

It was quite dark in the house, but the power-

ful lamp sent its searching rays into every corner of the bare dusty rooms.

Only in the basement was there any signs of occupancy, and even there it was not extensive; some cheap utensils in the kitchen and a bed, bureau and two or three chairs in a room off it. Upstairs the rooms were absolutely empty.

"Well," said Creston, as they paused in a small room on the third floor at the back of the house, "there seems to be nothing to learn here."

"I'm afraid not," replied the doctor in a tone of disappointment; "yet—hello—look at this!"

He had flashed the light upon the one window, and now he was examining the casing closely.

"Screw-holes, and at regular intervals on each side!" he exclaimed. "There have been bars here, Creston, and they've been recently removed, too!"

"By George, you're right!" cried Creston, excited in spite of himself, "and there is another queer thing about this room, too. It's comparatively free from dust; all the others are thick with it."

Delaine nodded absently. He was staring at the window, apparently absorbed in thought.

"How can a man live a year in a room and leave absolutely no trace of his presence?" he asked at last, more to himself than to Creston. "There must be something. I wonder——"

He moved slowly about examining the walls, the door-knobs and the marble mantel above the open fireplace carefully.

Before the latter he finally knelt down, scraping in the mass of ashes and half-burned logs that filled it. Suddenly he paused, the rays of the lantern turned upon the top of one of the brass andirons, and after a moment he picked it up and arose.

"See if the top of that other one unscrews," he said shortly.

Creston looked at him in amazement, but after a moment he pulled out the remaining andiron and did as he was told.

"This one seems solid," he said after a futile struggle with the ball of shining metal that formed the top of the andiron. "Does that one unscrew?"

"Let's see it," returned the doctor, ignoring his question, and taking the andiron from Creston he set it beside the other on the floor and examined both closely, finally producing a small pocket magnifying-glass to assist him.

Presently he looked up with a smile.

"I thought we'd find something!" he said triumphantly. "You were here, Creston. The proof is absolute. Look here——" He paused suddenly, springing to his feet with a cry, and following his glance Berkeley saw a huge form loom in the dark of the doorway.

He saw the doctor seize the lantern and whirl it aloft, then something flashed through the air, a thousand stars danced before his eyes and then—blackness.

When Creston regained consciousness darkness surrounded him. He felt sick and dazed and his head throbbed painfully, but presently as memory returned he sat up.

He was alone. He listened, but not a sound broke the stillness. Then suddenly a thrill of fear ran through him—what was that strange odor that assailed his nostrils? It was an acrid, penetrating odor that he recognized, and he sprang to his feet with an exclamation of horror.

The house was on fire, and the room rapidly filling with smoke! He must escape at once! But he had lost all sense of direction. Where was the door?

Hurriedly he dragged his matchbox from his pocket, struck a light, even in his excitement was amazed to see that the door stood wide open. Evidently, he thought, they believed they had finished him.

But he had no time for speculation. Already the smoke was growing uncomfortably dense. Rapidly he ran downstairs, holding his breath against the stifling fumes, and a moment later he had torn open the front door and dashed out into the pure cold air.

But as he stepped from the porch he saw Delaine coming around the corner of the house, the lamp in one hand and a revolver in the other, and he stepped back, drawing his own pistol from his pocket.

Delaine evidently saw the movement, for he halted.

"It's all right!" he called, returning his revolver to his pocket; "it's I, Delaine. Come on, let's get away from here!"

Creston hesitated. What explanation could the doctor make this time, he wondered, and he watched him warily as he came up.

"That must have been the ex-caretaker," the doctor said easily. "He threw his knife at you. Lord! I thought you were done for, but you got the hilt instead of the point luckily, and it only knocked you senseless. I chased the fellow a little way, but he escaped, and when I got back I found the kitchen door open and a nice little fire going.

"Your rascally cousin was responsible for that. I suppose he saw us start and followed us. He sneaked out of the kitchen just as I came up, but I had to take care of the fire, so he managed to get away."

"Oh, so that is it," remarked Creston rather dryly.

The doctor glanced at him curiously, smiled, but said nothing, and at that moment they reached the automobile.

The chauffeur sat alone on the front seat.

"Hello! Where's the detective?" asked Creston, as the doctor and he climbed into the car, which immediately started.

"I found a use for him after all," replied Delaine shortly. "He's after the caretaker."

CHAPTER EIGHT

CRESTON FIGHTS

THE drive home was a silent one, for Creston's thoughts were busy, and he was worn out with the excitement of the day.

As the car drew up before Creston's door the doctor spoke.

"Though so far we seem to accomplish little," he said, "I am satisfied that I am on the right track, and I want you to keep close to your rooms and wait until you hear from me." And without waiting to listen to Creston's answer, he gave the order "Home," and the automobile sped swiftly away.

The next morning Creston rose refreshed and, except for a black-and-blue bruise on his forehead and a slight headache, as well as ever.

But he decided to abandon his waiting methods; he was going to take the offensive now. Going to fight, fight hard, and his first bout would be with Doctor Delaine.

As he left the house he paused a moment on the steps, drawing on his gloves—then suddenly he started forward, glaring up at the window on the third floor of the house opposite, behind the curtain of which an anxious dark face had just disappeared, like a rabbit darting into its burrow.

With an exclamation of rage Creston dashed across the street into the vestibule and rang the first bell he came to. Then as the latch clicked he sprang into the hall and up the stairs two steps at a time.

There was no name on the door of the flat where he had seen the face, but he did not hesitate nor waste time in useless ringing, but setting his shoulder to the door snapped the lock, and before the man at the window had time to realize that his cousin was in the room Creston had him by the throat.

"Now, Dick Brant!" he said, when with starting eyes and gasping breath the man begged gurglingly for mercy, "sit down at that table and write your confession Write as I dictate if you value your life. And don't forget that I have had all the details at first hand from the celebrated Doctor Delaine."

Brant sank into the chair at the table indicated, nursing his bruised throat anxiously, a furtive, frightened eye upon his captor.

"Does—did Delaine tell you?" he whispered, scarce able to articulate.

"He did. Now write!"

And Brant wrote slowly and with many promptings, his cunning eyes continually searching his inquisitor's face.

Three-quarters of an hour later Creston, still dragging the miserable Brant, swept aside the attendant at Doctor Delaine's door and burst without ceremony into his library.

"Now!" he cried triumphantly, hurling Brant into a chair, "I've got things where I want them. This poor tool of yours has confessed fully in black and white, and his signature has been acknowledged before a notary. Is anything else needed, Doctor Hartley Delaine?"

"Ah! You say he has confessed?" It was not the doctor who asked the question, but a very tall, slender, middle-aged man of military carriage, with a thick gray mustache and imperial, a thin, hawk-like nose and eyes like pools of black ink.

Creston turned in astonishment, for in his impetuosity he had seen no one but Delaine.

"Mr. Courtlandt!" he exclaimed, bewildered, "I didn't see you, sir—why——"

"Mr. Courtlandt is here at my request," said Doctor Delaine quietly. "I sent for him——"

But Courtlandt interrupted him calmly.

"You say, Mr. Creston, your cousin has confessed. May I ask how you persuaded him?"

"I choked it out of him," replied Creston grimly.

"Ah! And how did you get him to acknowledge his signature before a notary?"

Creston touched his overcoat pocket lightly, showing the outline of a revolver.

"So!" said Courtlandt deliberately. "Are you not aware that a confession made under duress is valueless?"

"It will be good enough to jail Brant and his accomplice, Doctor Delaine," responded Creston doggedly.

"I'm sorry, my boy," said Delaine calmly, "but I'm afraid you've had your trouble for nothing. You have evidently extracted a number of lies with some truth from your interesting cousin—but I am not the man."

"Indeed," sneered Creston harshly; "well, perhaps you will name him then."

"Certainly," returned Delaine. "He was the son of an old, respected and wealthy New York family who went to the dogs in his teens and finally was taken up by a wandering hypnotist. He soon outshone his master, went abroad, studied and finally blossomed into the world-famous hypnotist, Professor Xavia de la Bourdaloue. Few who know the man to-day have heard of this early phase of his existence. I am one of the few.

"Unlike most charlatans, he had real power, and had he stuck to it and continued his scientific studies he might have become one of the greatest hypnotists of his age, but unfortunately his father and brother were killed in an accident, the latter dying last, so the disinherited son inherited, under the intestacy laws of the state from his dead brother, came home, became respectable and married a wealthy young widow. Since then—though it is not generally known—Wall Street has taken most of his own large fortune, leaving him practically dependent on his wife.

"It was his house we visited last night, with so nearly fatal results. His real name, by the way, is Sidney Courtlandt."

Creston gasped and stared at Elsa's stepfather in amazement, but Courtlandt only laughed.

"Very good, doctor," he replied gaily, "an excellent joke, but remember, my dear sir, that Brant's confession involves you."

"Brant is an accomplished liar," returned the doctor. "You see, we visited your house on the Hudson last night, Mr. Courtlandt. There in a room on the third floor I discovered on the polished top of an andiron a very perfect thumbprint; in fact the whole hand was clearly defined. I got Creston—though he did not realize it at the time—to press his hand to the other andiron and compared the two. The prints were identical. It was in that room he spent the lost year of his life guarded by your caretaker and his wife, Oscar and Selma Schultz."

"Ingenious but not convincing," laughed Courtlandt easily. "Of course I deny in toto your—er—soft impeachment, but under the circumstances were such a foolish charge true I should ask—quite gently—what are you going to do about it?"

"I will add that the Schultzes were taken last night by my detectives," said the doctor. "Their confession was quite voluntary."

Creston sprang to his feet, but before he could speak a stout, round-faced, energetic little man bustled into the room.

"Well, well," he puffed. "Quite a family party, isn't it? I hope I don't intrude, doctor? Your man said I was to come right in. Mr. Courtlandt, how are you? Unexpected pleasure! Haven't forgotten me, have you? Judge Martin, of Cleveland. Hello, Dick, you and Berkeley both here, too. Well, that's fine! Kill three or four birds with one stone now."

He rattled on, shaking hands all around, without favor.

"Well! Well! Just my luck! Happened to be in Washington last night, doctor, and when your wire that Berkeley had turned up arrived at four this morning forwarded from Cleveland—I caught the early train for New York on the jump—say, how did you find out so soon?"

"Well, to tell the truth," replied Delaine dryly, "I rather expected in view of the wording of that will that he would turn up very soon after the expiration of the year; so I managed to be near his flat about midnight. Brant seemed quite anxious about his cousin, too. He'd even hired an apartment opposite so he might be near to welcome him. I met him in the vestibule."

"Well! Well!" repeated the judge. "Very nice that. Thoughtful. Certainly. But about that will. There's been a blunder made, gentlemen. I confess it. In my office, too. Stupidity of my stenographer—and Judge William McKinley Martin, too, by gad, for not reading over her work carefully."

For the first time the self-satisfied smile left Courtlandt's face, and he leaned forward, a half frown darkening his heavy brows, as his fathomless eyes, so strangely like ink-pools, sought Creston's.

"On guard!" snapped the doctor sharply and Berkeley started guiltily; then with a sudden frown of anger sat forward and stared fixedly at Courtlandt.

"Not this trip, Mr. Courtlandt," he said coolly. "I'm not half asleep now."

But if the judge saw this by-play he gave no sign.

"Yes," he continued breezily; "of course it's rather hard on Dick, but the fact is the will says that the year begins from the day Berkeley receives a correct copy of the will; and that confounded copy I sent him was two paragraphs short, and therefore no copy at all in law. So as a matter of fact and law, Berkeley has not yet had a copy and the year has not yet begun."

Courtlandt rose suddenly.

"Well," he said lightly, but the smile he assumed was but a poor counterfeit of the one he had won before the judge's entrance, "I will not intrude longer upon the family conference. Remarkable mistake that of yours, judge. It could not have happened more apropos had you the gift of reading the future."

"Or human character," supplemented the judge mildly.

"Ah! Yes, quite so," admitted Courtlandt. "Well, good day, gentlemen!" and he left with what grace he could summon.

"Well," Grant said sullenly, after Courtlandt's exit, "what about me? What do I get?"

He spoke to Martin, but the judge looked questioningly at Creston, and for a moment Berkeley hesitated. Dick had tried to prevent his complying with conditions and failed. He had forfeited one-half of both his legacy and income but——"

"Oh, give him the full amount," said Creston at last; "there's no use hitting a man when he's down—even that kind."

As soon as Brant had gone, Creston picked up his hat and held out his hand to the doctor.

"I——" he began, but Delaine silenced him with a gesture.

"Apologies are not in order," he said, smiling and taking Berkeley's hand in a hearty grip. "In our classic Americanese, 'Forget it!' And good luck to you. Oh! By the way," he added to the judge, "I understand that Mrs. Courtlandt and her daughter are visiting your family in Cleveland."

Creston, who was already at the door, stopped short, and as the judge admitted that such was the case, turned back, looking from one to the other with a half-sheepish, wholly pleased grin.

Delaine took out his watch.

"What train did you say you were going to take, judge?" he asked quizzically. "If I remember, there is one leaves in just an hour, and I think perhaps we'd better take it."

And they did. And in the decades of peace and happiness, honors and prosperity, Berkeley Creston—with the aid of Elsa, his wife—soon forgot that one full year of his life had been stolen.

The Lost Glove

By WALTER WILLIAMS

IT was past midnight. An automobile turned the corner of Wellington Avenue, and continued slowly down the broad and silent street. At numerous intervals the car was stopped, whereupon the chauffeur descended, and made a hurried inspection of the house nearest him. Each time, however, he returned hastily, and started the car forward again.

When about half-way down the street, the car was brought to another standstill. This time, as before, the chauffeur got out, and made his inspection. Returning, he thrust his head inside the car, and whispered to the man sitting there.

"Must be the place, sir—number 25."

The man inside turned and looked with one glance at the pretentious house which the chauffeur pointed out.

"Yes, this must be the one," he mumbled queerly, preparing to get out of the car. "You shall wait until I return. Let me see—if questioned by any one you——"

"I'll be waiting for the owner, sir," the chauffeur said hastily, remembering his previous instructions.

The man nodded approval. Stretching forth a gloved hand, he opened the door and stepped down on the street. Like a shadow, he limped through the huge iron gate and up the broad stairs. For an instant he paused, and assuring himself of the right number, fitted a key to the lock. The door swung noiselessly inward. The man stepped inside and closed the door.

The house gave forth no sound. Cat-like he stole through the many rooms. At times he stopped and listened keenly. Finally he came to a door that would not open. He inserted a slender key in the lock and slowly opened the door. He swept the room with his torch, and brought it to bear on a bulky object in the corner. Walking to the table, he adjusted the light in a satisfactory position. After removing his gloves, and placing them on the table, he squatted before the huge safe.

On the floor above a man stood listening nervously, endeavoring to hear a repetition of the sound which had awakened him. He had not been mistaken, some one was in the house. A slight rustle, as of paper, reached him faintly, and with a steadying hand on the wall he crept softly down the stairs. Through the semi-darkness of the room he could distinctly see a man—a man in black, kneeling before the open safe. As he watched he thought he saw the man fade into a shadow. A strangled cry escaped from his parched lips. Headlong he rushed into the room and snapped on the light.

The man was not there. It was impossible. He had seen him distinctly. A cold terror gripped the white-haired man as he turned and knelt before the safe.

He pawed the scattered pile of papers feverishly. One by one he opened the numerous drawers. Slowly he stood up.

"Gone," he whispered fearfully, trying to pierce the surrounding gloom with flinching eyes. "It's gone—so soon."

Suddenly his body became tense. As in a dream he heard the snap of the electric button. Save for the light from the torch, the room was again in darkness. Some one was standing in the hallway—had snapped the button. He watched the thick curtain with bloodshot eyes—saw it move.

With the agility born of fear, he leaped toward the moving curtain, striving with outstretched hands to grasp the unseen foe. His hands struck only the solid wall. He turned sharply. A shrill laugh broke from his lips.

"Crazy, I guess," he muttered to himself. "I've gone crazy."

His hands opened and closed convulsively. Again the curtain had moved faintly. He lunged forward, straight at the curtain; some one was there. He grunted as he felt the thing of flesh give way before him. He could easily choke the life out of it.

The struggle was fierce and silent. His powerful hands closed like a vise about the other's neck. A cold shiver passed over him as he saw the gray, evil face of the man below him. Unconsciously he tightened his grip. In a minute the other man would be senseless, and he could call the police.

A slim, white hand rose and descended swiftly, plunging a long, glittering needle into his arm. An intense pain shot through his body, making every muscle numb. In vain he tried to retain his hold on the man, whose serpentine eyes shone hatefully up at him. He felt the life in his body ooze away, slowly and surely. Everything turned black before him.

For a moment the murderer remained motionless, with his hand still clasped tightly around the slender needle. A fiendish look of anger crossed his face as he looked at the lifeless figure of the man who had so nearly got the best of him. After glancing about hurriedly, he knelt down near the door and picked up a tiny gleaming object. Carefully he dropped it into a pouch and put it in his pocket. Then he began to search in the safe, on the floor, and finally on the table. At last he found one of his black gloves. But the other one? Where was it? Again he searched hastily. It was gone.

The bell jangled harshly. The limping figure stuffed the single glove in his pocket and stepped into the darkened hallway. Some one was at the front door. Swiftly he passed to the rear of the house and, like a shadow, slipped out.

A half-hour had passed. Broad shafts of light shone from the windows of the house, which a short time before had apparently been deserted. Inspector Braly, who had been mysteriously summoned, had arrived and found an excited old man wandering aimlessly about the house. He had immediately taken charge, and phoned for Detective Naitland.

With restless energy he paced the hall and large front room, rolling an unlighted cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other. The old man followed doggedly at his heels. At each opportunity he attempted to talk to the inspector.

"I tell you," he began beseechingly, "that I——"

"Stop that line of chatter," the inspector broke in, wheeling about awkwardly. "Save your breath, man, till the chief comes. You'll need it," he added half sneeringly, as he looked at the man standing meekly before him.

The sudden ringing of the bell stopped further conversation. Braly rushed forward and opened the door. A man, clad in a loose raincoat, entered and gazed eagerly about him. He was tall, and had fair hair and gray eyes that seemed never to be still. His face broke into a merry smile at sight of the inspector.

"G'evening, Braly," he nodded pleasantly.

"'Evening yourself," grumbled the inspector, a bit ruffled.

"Has the person gone that causes that look of anguish on your face?" continued Detective Naitland, while his eyes darted about the room.

Braly's mouth opened in amazement.

"You know about it?" he questioned weakly.

"Sorry, but you'll have to explain, Braly. That little question of mine was easy. Some one came here recently in an auto, and I knew it wasn't you. Now quick, tell me what's the matter? Why did you call me? Who is this?" he asked, pointing to the man at the inspector's side.

Braly grinned sheepishly.

"Well," he began as if weighing each word, "some one called me at the station, and told me to rush over here. Said something about a black man. I came and found him," looking at the little man who still seemed excited.

"That was me that called you," broke in the now angry man. "I tried to tell you before."

Braly ignored him, and extracted the cigar from his mouth.

"I followed him, although he was so excited he couldn't talk," the inspector went on. "It's serious enough, chief—cold murder."

Naitland whistled.

"Murder? Are you sure, Braly? Who is it?"

"It looked to me like old Carleton himself."

"Of course it's him," again broke in the restless little man.

"That's impossible, Braly," Naitland said sharply. "Carleton left town yesterday, according to the papers. You seem to know something about this," he added, addressing the little man. "What's your name, and who are you, anyhow?"

"Braun, sir. I'm Mr. Carleton's gardener. And," he said, "you were wrong about Mr. Carleton. He came back to-night."

"Where is he?" asked Naitland. "Let us go there at once."

Braly led the way to a room and switched on the light. The lifeless form of a man was stretched out at full length on the floor. Naitland bent closer to the contorted face below him. Then he stood up.

"It's Carleton," he said slowly. "For a while I thought you were wrong."

He turned and regarded the face of the gardener more keenly.

"Braun, I want you to tell me what you know—everything."

The old man nodded excitedly, and spoke without further urging.

"Mr. Carleton got back to-night," he began slowly. "All the servants were gone—didn't expect him so soon. It was twelve, or a little after, when I heard an auto coming up the street. When it got here it stopped. A man got out—he was dressed all over in black—and went in the house. I went to the chauffeur and asked him who the man was. He said it was the owner. It wasn't Mr. Carleton at all, so I knew——"

"Yes, I understand," Naitland cut in. "Now, what happened after that?"

"I went to the door and rang the bell. No one answered. I waited while the chauffeur started the car and stopped it near the street light. The man then came out of the house, got in, and they started off. The front door had been left open and I went in the house and found Mr. Carleton dead. I called up the police station right away."

"That was right," Naitland said, walking restlessly to and fro.

He began to search for any possible clues. The safe, with its scattered papers, attracted him first. Braly watched him silently. He had helped Naitland on many of his cases, and well knew how much the latter enjoyed the apparent strangeness of this new case.

"Some one coming here soon, I suppose," Naitland said, without looking up from his work.

"Yes, the coroner and a few others," Braly answered. "Ought to be here now."

Naitland finished his inspection of the safe and walked toward the hallway, piecing the fragmentary clues together. A man in black had entered the house and had opened the safe. Evidently he knew of Carleton's expected absence. In some manner Carleton had blundered into the room, and as a result had lost his life. But what

could the murderer have been after that necessitated the murder of Carleton?

Naitland gave up further speculation as he knelt quickly on the rug. He took a small magnifying glass from his pocket and crept carefully along until he was in the next room.

"Come here, Braly," he said almost immediately after. "Can you see the slight imprint from a shoe near the wall? And here is another."

As he spoke he crawled along, following the path of the steps. They led directly away from the safe. Finally they crisscrossed and ended in the hall. Naitland spoke his suspicions aloud.

"He must have heard Carleton and stepped into the next room."

He measured the clearest imprint carefully, and again entered the smaller room. On seeing Braun he was reminded of one important detail that should not be missed.

"Braun," he asked, "did you notice the number of that car?"

The man gazed at him blankly.

"Why, I never thought of it," he answered weakly.

"No, I presume not. I can probably find out, but it will take time. Braly, you might—— Why, what's that you've found? A glove, isn't it?"

He stepped forward eagerly and took the glove from Braly's hand.

"I found it lying between a pile of books," the inspector began to explain. "It must have been brushed aside."

He stopped, dimly aware that something was the matter.

"What's the matter—what's wrong, Chief?" he said rather jerkily. "You—you look as if you had seen a ghost."

Naitland seemed not to have heard. He was leaning heavily against the table. With frightful intensity he continued to stare at the limp glove in his hand. His face changed gradually, assuming a look of dread and repulsion, something Braly had never seen before. Finally he raised his head to find the inspector nervously watching him.

"Take it," he said wearily, holding out the glove to Braly. "Keep it. I don't want it—don't want to see it again. Take it, I say."

Braly could not conceal his surprise as he took the proffered glove.

"Did you recognize it, Chief?"

Naitland remained silent. He began to pace up and down the room.

The inspector looked more curiously at the glove. Lily he turned it inside-out. His attention was attracted by the small initials inside the glove.

"An L and an M," he said, partly aloud. "L. M."

Naitland looked up quickly. The whispered repetition of the two letters, and the single glove in Braly's hand, had made him see the definite reason for the murder.

"My God," he whispered to himself, "why didn't I suspect before? Oh, why——?"

He stopped abruptly and wheeled about.

Some one was ringing the bell. Braly rushed out in the hall and hurried back.

"It's them," he whispered. "It's the coroner. Don't you want me to——?"

"I don't want anything done now," Naitland interrupted, raising his hand.

"But the clues, Chief? The footprints?"

"They are all needless."

The bell rang once more.

"You don't know, do you?" questioned Braly hastily.

"Yes, I know—now."

"You know—now—the murderer?"

"Yes."

Naitland turned, and walked toward the door.

"Braly," he said over his shoulder, "I want you and both of the Perkin brothers to meet me at Duval's place in half an hour. Get Wyman, too, if you can."

"All right, Chief."

Naitland went out, nodding slightly to the coroner and the three men who were with him. Braly led them to the room where Carleton was. As briefly as possible he gave them the details of the case. He did not mention Naitland's discovery. Going to the phone he called the three men which Naitland had wanted. Then he left the house and started to walk rapidly downtown.

He passed through numerous small streets, and finally entered the restaurant which they had decided upon. He made his way to a table in the corner. Two men, who were seated at the table, nodded pleasantly at his arrival.

"Got my message all right, did you?" said Braly, sinking into a chair. "Where is Wyman?"

"He'll be here in a few minutes," one of the brothers answered.

They glanced up to find Wyman coming toward them. Naitland had not yet come. The minutes ticked on endlessly, and with each passing moment the four men became more restless.

One by one the last of the night's loiterers had gone, leaving the place practically empty. Braly turned and looked at the clock.

"We've been here an hour now," he said nervously. "We'll wait five minutes more, or take it for granted that Naitland won't come."

He stopped and raised a hand for silence. The men listened eagerly. An automobile was tearing swiftly down the street. It ground to a stop in front of the restaurant.

In a moment the door opened and Naitland strode in. He walked rapidly to the corner table.

The tired lines of his face belied his outward appearance of freshness. His hat was pulled shapelessly down over his head. A heavy black mud covered the lower part of his pants and his shoes.

He bowed hastily to the men, and sat in the proffered chair. Braly waited for him to speak.

"Has the inspector told you why I wanted you?" he asked, looking at Wyman and the Perkin brothers.

They nodded, and he drank a single cup of black coffee.

"I have learned where L. M. is," he said simply. "We're going there."

Braly leaned forward.

"You know now—for sure?" he hesitated.

Naitland inclined his head. Again Braly noticed the detective's face, half sorrowful, half fearful, as it had been when he had first seen the glove.

A vague, uneasy suspicion entered Braly's mind.

"You might—could you see this L. M. alone?" he suggested at random.

For an instant Naitland brightened. Then he shook his head wearily.

"A good guess, Braly, but it's too late for that—now. I have made up my mind. I'm going to find out why Carleton was murdered by L. M. And then——"

He squared his jaw, and took a piece of paper from his pocket. On this he drew a rough sketch of a house and some surrounding territory. Carefully he marked four crosses on the paper.

"Each cross represents a man," he explained. "While I'm inside of the house I want you to watch from the places I have marked. And remember to watch closely—he might slip by any time."

He pushed back in his chair and stuffed the paper in his pocket. Taking out his watch, he noted the time.

"It's late," he said, rising.

They passed out, following Naitland. He walked swiftly, looking neither to the right nor left. He did not speak, refusing even to answer the questions which Braly asked him. Finally they arrived at a more desolate part of the city. Naitland crossed over a wide empty lot and stopped.

"This is the street," he said.

He walked forward again for a few minutes. The street became narrower and more deserted. Finally he stopped and pointed to a solitary house which loomed up in the near distance.

"L. M. is in that house," he said slowly. "Now is our chance. Braly and Wyman take the two places on the farther side. Both of you," he added, speaking to the two brothers, "take the places on this side. And don't let anything make you leave your places."

The men spread out, keeping under cover to avoid the possibility of being seen by the man inside of the house. Braly reached a point which corresponded to the place Naitland had marked on his paper, and stopped. He glanced about. The two Perkins and Wyman were also ready. Naitland had remained motionless as if undecided how to act. He carefully examined his automatic, and returned it to his pocket. Finally he went toward the house. He opened a side door, which Braly had not before noticed, and disappeared from view.

Braly watched intently. Naitland had been in the house about half an hour. So far nothing had occurred. There was no sound—no indication of any struggle. A question formed in Braly's mind. What if L. M. was not there?

He stopped further conjecture, and scrutinized the house more closely. He thought he had seen smoke come from one of the windows. As he watched it appeared again—a thin, straggling column of bluish smoke, which curled upward into the air. A sudden puff of wind brought the smoke in increasing volumes. In an instant a tiny flame had appeared.

The fire gained rapid headway. The dense clouds of smoke and the vivid flames became plainly visible. An ever-increasing crowd of people gathered about the house, making it practically impossible for Braly to see anything.

He was undecided how to act. He thought again of Naitland—how carefully he had planned to make everything perfect. Naitland was afraid that L. M. might get away. He had entered the house with the assurance that he could rely implicitly on his men.

The inspector watched still more closely for any signs of the man in black. Grimly he watched the rapid progress of the fire, which continued to burn freely. Suddenly he realized that in the large crowd which stood about there was not a single person who believed otherwise that the flaming house was deserted. Even now he might be too late. Perhaps Naitland was lying helpless in the burning building.

He blew a single sharp blast as a signal to the others and rushed forward. The crowd gave way grudgingly before him. He met Wyman first, and at the same time saw the two brothers rushing up.

"Naitland," he shouted at them. "He's still in there. Get in the back way."

They obeyed instantly. Together Braly and Wyman began to force an entrance.

"Braly! Braly!" a voice shouted.

The men redoubled their efforts to open the door.

"Braly!" the voice shouted again. "He's going—through the crowd."

It was Naitland's voice. He was leaning out of the upstairs window. Through the smoke they caught a glimpse of him pointing wildly down the street. L. M. had escaped. Even as they looked they saw the limping figure detach itself from the crowd and disappear entirely.

Hurriedly they ran up the burning stairs. There was no further sound. Braly jammed his shoulder against the door. It gave way and they rushed in.

The small room was filled with dense clouds

of smoke. Naitland was lying unconscious on the floor. His right hand was clenched tightly, and doubled under his body.

Braly and Wyman gave a hasty glance about the room and carried him out. In a short time he had revived sufficiently to look about him.

"L. M.—you got him?" was his first question.

Braly shifted uneasily on his feet and shook his head.

"I thought you were hurt. L gave the signal and we rushed in. You called them—it was too late."

Naitland's eyes narrowed as he stood up. He looked angrily at the smoldering house and the crowd of onlookers.

"The fire"—he ground out between his teeth—"the fire—he started it. And you never suspected. The crowd made his escape easy—the fools."

Braly looked up suddenly. For the first time he realized that the fire had not been an accident. Rather it had been a hastily conceived plan of escape—a plan that could only have been carried out by a man of blind courage and a clever brain—such a man as L. M. Braly saw the whole thing clearly. It had seemed impossible that the man could get away, and yet the impossible had happened.

"I should have been prepared for anything—from him," Naitland was saying. "However——"

He stopped uncertainly.

"It was a close call for me," said he, addressing both Braly and Wyman.

He raised his right arm and slowly opened his still tightly closed fist. A rather small object flashed brightly.

"The famous Constantine diamond," he smiled. "Carleton, as you probably know, had an insane desire for the thing. He managed to buy it two days ago. It is evidently worth a fortune."

Braly could not check an involuntary gasp of amazement at sight of the gem which glittered in Naitland's palm. It was fully as large as the end of his thumb. The many polished surfaces reflected the first rays of the morning sun in a thousand silvery gleams. It seemed to him almost like an evil thing, so cold and beautiful was it.

He spoke brokenly.

"L. M.—he got it from Carleton and you——"

"And I got it from him," Naitland finished, as he wrapped the diamond in his handkerchief.

He reflected for a moment. Then turning to Braly, he said:

"You will remember I entered the house by that little side door. I hid myself in his room. After a while he came in. Evidently he didn't suspect anything, because he took a small pouch out of his pocket and put it in a concealed place. When he went out I took the pouch—the diamond was in it. I went to the room where you finally found me, thinking he was there. I heard a noise, and then a heavy weight fell on my head. I was unconscious for a time—then I shouted to you, Braly. I must have fallen again. You came then."

He stopped and looked up. One of the Perkins brothers was approaching them. His face and hands had been blackened in several places by the fire.

"Where's Fred?" asked Naitland as soon as he was within hearing.

"He's gone after L. M. I got into the house first, though, just before he went."

Naitland smiled slightly. Fred was clever and persistent, but he was no match for L. M. He might, however, learn something which would aid the detective.

The thoughts of their recent failure to get L. M. troubled Naitland greatly. Again and again he fought with himself to overcome his feeling of anxiety and dread. If only L. M. could have waited.

"There is nothing we can do now," he said a moment later. "We shall have to wait."

He turned, and in a short time was lost to view.

Naitland had been home an hour when his telephone rang. He rose from his chair and picked up the receiver eagerly.

"Hello! Detective Naitland speaking."

For a second there was no answer. Then some one spoke, hurriedly and rather breathless. Naitland recognized the voice.

"Is that you, Perkins?"

"Yes, Chief. I've been after L. M. I lost him just now at State street. After a while I found out that he had gone to Gratton Place."

"To Gratton Place?" Naitland asked unsteadily. "Are you—are you sure, Perkins?"

"Yes, Chief. He went to the Billings' house. I found a note there that Miss Billings had left for her mother. It said that she had left for a place called Three Corners with you. He must have sent a false message to her."

"Three Corners—with her," Naitland shuddered.

The thing he had feared had happened. L. M. had struck, not at him—that would have been impossible then—but in a deadlier, more hateful fashion. In his blind unreasonableness he had sought for revenge. The fiend knew of Naitland's love for Miss Billings, and believed he could strike at his relentless pursuer through her. The detective's eyes smoldered dangerously.

"Get Braly and the men, Perkins," he said, with a calm intensity of voice. "Then go to Three Corners. Braly knows where the place is. Take the roughest road and follow the rail fence until you come to an old mine. L. M. must be on his way there now—a half-hour before us. Hurry, Perkins, for God's sake; it's a matter of life and death."

He sprang from the phone and hastily put on his coat. In those few moments while he was preparing to leave his mind was troubled by a hun-

dred disturbing thoughts. Uppermost was his anxiety for Miss Billings. That she should be harmed in any way by the man in black seemed to him almost a crime. He sighed wearily. In an hour, or possibly two, the end would come. The thing which had marred his life, and even his success, could not go on any longer. It must be either he or L. M. now.

He opened the drawer to his desk and took out his revolver. As he rushed out he slipped some fresh cartridges into the breech. He hailed the first car which was passing by.

"I am Detective Naitland," he shouted at the astonished driver. "Keep going, and take the lower road. I'll direct you."

The driver hesitated only momentarily, and then he quickened the car's speed. They rushed on rapidly. Naitland leaned forward so that he could more easily see the road. He glanced apprehensively at his watch. It was almost ten o'clock.

Ten minutes later another car was speeding along the same road. It contained the four men Naitland had wanted. The car was going at a dangerous speed. Braly sat in the front seat, beside Wyman, who was driving.

"Faster!" he shouted in the latter's ear, as the car slowed down on a rough stretch of road. "Don't slow down. We've got to gain time. Naitland will be there alone."

The car continued to speed on, rapidly leaving the city behind it. The country became more and more open. Braly stretched out a hand to steady himself and stood up. Far down the road he could see the huge signpost which marked Three Corners. They reached the place quickly.

"Take the left one," he shouted, picking the worst of the three roads.

Wyman jerked the wheel sharply. The car skidded violently, and finally straightened out on the narrow road.

Braly glanced about. No one was in sight. Naitland was probably already there.

Slowly they chugged up a steep incline. Suddenly Wyman jammed the brakes and uttered a hoarse cry of warning. The car creaked to a standstill. In amazement the men got out and looked ahead of them.

They stopped just in time. The road ended in mid-air, with a sheer drop of a hundred feet.

Braly recovered from his astonishment quickly, and followed some tracks which he believed were Naitland's. Almost immediately he beckoned to the others.

"Look," said he fiercely, pointing downward.

They did as directed. Far below, on the ugly stretch of ground which had once been part of a mine, they saw two figures, a limping one in black and the other a girl. The distance was too great to see clearly. The girl, however, seemed surrounded, or partly hidden from view, by a huge pile of stones. Almost at her feet was the gaping hole of the mine shaft.

"It's them," Braly whispered hoarsely. "But where is Naitland?"

He looked to the right and the left, and finally toward the partly hidden road. Neither Naitland nor any one else was in sight. Grasping his revolver tightly, he began to clamber down the rocky path. The others followed silently. They were too far away to be noticed by the man below them. In a short time they had reached a position of comparative nearness.

A hot, burning sun beat down mercilessly on the desolate surroundings. The mine shaft was the center of a large gently sloping basin. All about them were huge piles of stones and rusted iron.

L. M. was working silently and swiftly. At times they could detect him in the act of gazing off at the road as if he were not quite certain that he was alone. Then, with the same haste as before, he would resume his terrible work.

"My God," Braly burst out, as they came to the last stone pile between them and the mine shaft. "She's inside—helpless inside the stones."

They dared not go on farther, but stood watching the strange scene with fascinated eyes. The girl was lying motionless in a partly ruined stone chamber. L. M. was adding more stones. In a short time the stone prison would be completed.

Braly's body became tense. They must not wait much longer. It was impossible to go nearer, and yet they were too far away to be of any use. A cold sweat broke out all over his body. It was eleven o'clock, and still Naitland had not arrived. He turned and watched with quivering muscles. The realization that he was powerless to do anything without adding to Miss Billings' danger made him undecided how to act.

The stone tower was almost completed. L. M. staggered under the weight of the last huge stone. He reached the tower. Slowly, almost inch by inch, he pushed the stone toward the top.

Braly's breath came in short gasps. Blindly he rushed forward, uttering a hoarse cry of warning.

The man in black turned instantly. He dropped the stone and leaped out of sight. With an amazing rapidity he crawled toward a long pole which was wedged behind the keystone of the tower. His eyes gleamed hatefully. He gripped the pole and began to force the stone outward.

A horrible numbness swept over Braly as he saw the stone begin to move. Slowly it slid outward, causing the stones above it to sag perilously. In an instant the tower would fall and crush the girl inside.

The approaching tragedy was suddenly averted by the sharp report of a pistol. The man in black shrieked, and held his shattered wrist with his other hand. He sneered as he saw Braly running toward him. As he backed away he reached for his revolver. Two more shots sounded in rapid succession before he could accomplish his deadly purpose. With a final convulsive gasp, he

stumbled, regained his balance, and finally crumpled in a shapeless heap. Unchecked by anything, he rolled slowly to the edge of the shaft.

Naitland stepped from his hiding place, a smoking revolver in his hand. As he did so the lifeless body of L. M. slid over the edge of the shaft and disappeared entirely.

The group of men stood speechless. The end had been so unexpected, so triumphant, that words were impossible. Naitland regained his composure first, and rushed toward the tower of stone. He began to pull the stones away rapidly. In a short time he had lifted his financée out, and untied her hands and feet.

She was unharmed. Her eyes spoke plainly the thankfulness she felt. Crying softly, she turned to Naitland.

"Oh, I thought you wouldn't ever come," she said, between sobs. "I never doubted for an instant that the note wasn't for you. When I stepped into the car I saw—him," she shuddered slightly "Ugh! It was all too horrible for anything."

"I know," said Naitland gently. "The whole thing must have seemed like a hideous nightmare to you. He thought that by imprisoning you he could have me in his power. He must have forgotten that I knew about this old mine and the stone tower. Otherwise he might have succeeded."

"I was afraid that you hadn't got here," said Braly, after a moment's pause. When I saw him push that last stone toward the top I rushed out. God! Those few minutes seemed like hours to me. And yet it was you that saved Miss Billings. I was a helpless fool."

"I was in the tunnel near that small stone pile over there," explained Naitland. "It was my only chance to get near without being seen. When you rushed out I had to shoot. I aimed at his wrist."

Braly did not answer. Finally he reached into his pocket and took out the glove which Naitland had recognized before. He passed it over to the detective.

"The glove you gave me to keep, Chief. You seemed to be afraid of it then. When you saw it, you recognized it—knew who the murderer of Carleton was. You didn't bother about any of the other clues."

"That is right," Naitland said slowly, as if trying to find an answer to the many questions which had been asked him. "I did know who the murderer was when I saw the glove."

"But how did you know?" persisted Braly. "You knew who this person was, and even the place where he lived. Yet you always seemed to be afraid—the mere mention of the initials L. M. made you silent. Why?"

The group waited for Naitland to speak. Not one of them had the slightest idea who L. M. was.

"That was Leon Marchland that I killed," he finally said in a low voice.

"Leon Marchland?" frowned Braly. "That means nothing to me. I never heard the name before."

"My name is Marchland," said Naitland quietly.

Every one, including Ruth Billings, turned a startled face towards the detective. He had killed a man whose name was Marchland, and now he claimed that his name was also Marchland.

"Impossible!" roared Braly.

"Impossible maybe—yet true," Naitland said. "My name was Hugh Marchland until I came on the police force. For various reasons I changed it to Naitland. Leon Marchland was my half-brother. One of his peculiarities was his fondness to dress entirely in black. He was injured when he was young, and his clever mind became criminally inclined. From petty offenses he gradually grew to be a dangerous and clever criminal. I pleaded with him, but it was all in vain. For years I have been dreading the time when he should eventually be found out. When I saw his initials in the glove I realized that that time had finally come. It was I that must find the murderer of Carleton. That man was my brother. You can see now why I hesitated so. I knew his every secret, yet he did not even know that I was on the case until he found me in his house. He hated me, and planned his revenge. And finally I killed him."

For a long time no one spoke. The whole affair seemed tragic. Yet they all realized that a shadow had passed from Naitland's life.

"The end has finally come," said Naitland, glancing from one to the other. "I shall try to make good the name of Naitland, and forget that of Marchland."

The four men walked away slowly, leaving Ruth and Naitland together.

WHY DO FLOWERS HAVE PERFUMES?

MAN uses oils to provide himself with perfume, but the plant or flower has another purpose than this. The perfume is not made for man's use, but for the use of the plant itself. In the plant and flower world the smell of the plant which is in the flower is a part of the scheme whereby plants reproduce themselves.

Every plant in order to reproduce itself must produce a seed. The flowers are in most cases the advance agent of the coming seed. Each flower produces within itself a little powder called the pollen, but as plants are like people—also male and female—they are dependent upon each other for the production of a perfect seed. The pollen from the male plant must be mixed with the pollen of the female before a perfect seed results,

The Master Of Disguises

By EDGAR F. PORTER

IT was midnight when the report of a pistol rang out.

I had reached the corner of a street and saw a gentlemanly looking man in a silk hat rushing toward a large store in which a light burned.

He was followed by two policemen.

"This way—this way! The shot came from our store!" he cried to the policemen.

Being a detective, I followed the men in blue coats, and we all reached the open door of a large jewelry store.

Within a striking scene presented itself.

An aged man lay on the floor, and blood issuing from a bullet wound in his temple told he had been shot through the brain.

Beside him, with a smoking revolver in his hand, was a young and handsome man.

"Arrest that man. I accuse him of the murder of my brother," cried the man in the silk hat.

The two policemen rushed forward and seized the young man with the revolver.

He seemed dazed and stupid, but he offered no resistance.

"Search him!" cried the accuser.

It was done.

In the pocket of the young man was found a case of diamonds worth twenty thousand dollars.

Suddenly, as the policemen produced the case of jewels, the young man seemed to realize the position of peril in which circumstances had placed him.

"I am innocent of this crime. I am the confidential clerk of Mr. Mathews and came here at his request to assist in making a secret inventory of the stock of diamonds in the safe. For some time small jewels have been stolen, and we were planning a way to catch the thief. A moment ago he sent me into the inner room of the store to procure the diamonds you found in my pocket, and when, at the sound of a pistol shot, I rushed back, I found my employer lying dead and *my own* revolver, which I had left here, was beside him. The assassin killed James Mathews with my pistol, but I am innocent. My name is Stanley Dale, and every one who knows me will tell you I am an honest man. Do not arrest me! The shock will kill my poor widowed mother," the young man said, excitedly.

"Your story is improbable. I am my brother's partner, officers. My name is Jason Mathews, and again I accuse Stanley Dale of my brother James' murder," said the man in the silk hat.

There was something in the manner of the man that aroused my suspicions of him, though I could not at that moment have explained precisely what it was; while, on the other hand, Stanley Dale impressed me favorably.

"We shall have to arrest you, young man," said one of the officers, sternly.

Then I came forward.

"What, Cyphers!" exclaimed both policemen, as they recognized me.

My name is Tom Cyphers, but when I was a successful Philadelphia detective in active service, years ago, I was called familiarly "Cyphers" by those who knew me well.

"Yes, the old man's around, boys," I said carelessly; and then, when they were handcuffing the unfortunate young man, who still protested his innocence, I began to look about.

Meanwhile, I had noted that at the mention of my name Jason Mathews had started, while an expression very much like *fear* appeared upon his face.

I was certainly in luck that night, for upon the floor I found a button partly broken where the thread passed through it, as though it had been violently pulled from some garment, probably a coat, as the button was an ordinary cloth-covered coat button.

Further, under the finger nails of the murdered man I found several *human hairs—hairs from the head of a man.*

Stanley Dale was now led away, and Jason Mathews turned to me.

"You are a detective, sir, I understand; and I think that you must agree with me that circumstances point to young Dale as the guilty party," he said.

"Perhaps," I replied.

Then I left the office.

Jason Mathews said nothing about retaining me, but I had, so to say, retained myself to work up this rather interesting case.

But what promised so well at the outset turned out to be a very intricate and puzzling affair.

I made it a point to gain an interview with Stanley Dale in his cell next morning, and when I left the young man at the close of that interview, the opinion I had almost instantly formed that he was not the guilty party was materially strengthened. I went from the cell of the accused firmly pledged to use all my skill to accomplish his acquittal—to prove his innocence of James Mathews' murder.

Some of my friends used to call me a master of disguises, and I think I can say, without exposing myself to the charge of egotism, that I had been very successful in the art of concealing my identity under assumed personalities.

Within a few days I had accumulated certain information regarding the private affairs of Jason Mathews, the brother of the murdered man, that induced me to cultivate the acquaintance of his household, and particularly the lady who presided at his residence as housekeeper.

I accidentally saw a photograph of this lady at the house of a friend who moved in the same social circle as Jason Mathews and the lady in question, who was supposed to be a distant relative of Mr. Jason Mathews, and was, of course, treated as his social equal.

I at once recognized the picture as that of a woman who had been concerned in a criminal mystery in New Orleans, that I had investigated some time previous, and who had disappeared from that city, leaving no trace behind her.

A grave suspicion regarding this woman, that lacked but little of certainty, was in my mind, and although the two clues to James Mathews' murderer in my possession—namely the lock of hair found clinging to the finger nails of the murdered man, and the broken button—had as yet developed nothing, I was still confident that those seemingly insignificant objects would play a leading part in the solution of the mystery.

A few weeks later there was a social gathering at the residence of a fashionable lady of Mrs. Bouvier's acquaintance—Mrs. Bouvier was the housekeeper of Jason Mathews—and, despite the recent death of James Mathews, Mrs. Bouvier attended the party, although Jason Mathews, for appearance sake, did not.

An acquaintance of mine, old Colonel Darkley, who was very rich, and quite a character in his way, being a widower noted for his eccentricities, and who had never met Mrs. Bouvier, was invited to the evening party of which I am speaking.

To accommodate me he consented to remain at home, while I went in his place, made up so cleverly that even the colonel's own valet took me for his master.

At the party the success of my disguise was demonstrated, and I was received as Colonel Darkley, and presented during the evening to Mrs. Bouvier, to whom I made myself agreeable.

And when the lady was retiring from the drawing-room, I followed her into the little parlor beyond the drawing-room, on her way to the cloak-room, whither she was going to don her wraps preparatory to taking her departure.

I removed my white kids and took her hand, which she permitted me to retain for a moment, and I murmured the hope that I might renew our acquaintance at her home. I knew that an amused group of ladies at the door were delighted witnesses of the scene.

The result was I called at Jason Mathews' residence next day and was duly received by the lady, who, of course, entertained not the slightest suspicion of my real identity.

I had an object in all this, as you may well suppose, and it was this:

I meant to look over Jason Mathews' wardrobe to see if I could discover a garment from which the button I found beside the murdered man had been torn.

The lock of hair found was gray, and as Jason Mathews' hair was black, it could not have been torn from his head it seemed and yet to say the truth I believed that he was the assassin of his brother and I had my own theory regarding the lock of gray hair.

I passed a pleasant half hour with Mrs. Bouvier and that call was the commencement of a series of visits.

After a few calls I timed one of my visits so as to arrive at the house in the evening when I knew both Jason Mathews and the lady were absent. A servant admitted me and ushered me into the parlor saying that the lady upon whom I had called would soon return.

I signified my intention to await her arrival, and I was left alone.

This was just what I desired, and watching my opportunity, I slipped out of the parlor, and, unobserved by any of the household, crept upstairs to the sleeping-room of Jason Mathews, which I had previously located.

At last, unsuspected, I had the opportunity I had worked for.

I hastily began my investigation, and in a closet filled with gentleman's wearing apparel I found a coat from which a button was missing, although a part of it still clung to the thread.

In my pocket was the button I had picked up beside the murdered man, and upon comparison I found that the broken button must have been torn from Jason Mathews' coat.

So far all was satisfactory; but the gray hair!

Could it be that Jason Mathews had an accomplice?

I did not think that such was the fact. I believed he killed his brother alone, although, in my opinion Mrs. Bouvier had a knowledge of the crime.

I continued my search, and at the bottom of a hat box, concealed by other articles with which the box was filled, I found a gray wig.

The hair was exactly the same as that I had found on the murdered man.

To my mind, the evidence of Jason Mathews' guilt was clear now, and I was turning to make my way from the closet when I heard excited voices downstairs.

The voices were those of Jason Mathews and Mrs. Bouvier.

I listened intently.

"I tell you you have been duped and deceived. I just left Colonel Darkley. It is impossible that he could be here now. By heavens, I think I see it all. Cyphers, the detective, is a friend of Darkley, and the old rascal has been assuming his identity to deceive you. You know he is a master of disguise," I heard Mathews say.

"But the gentleman is in the house now; at

least the servant says he has not left it. Oh, Jason, if that man is here he may have it already in his power to——"

"Hush!" cried Jason Mathews, interrupting Mrs. Bouvier, who was the last speaker. "If Cyphers is in this house, he shall not leave it. It is now late at night, and as he always works in secret, no one in all probability knows he is here. We can deceive our servants and make them think he has departed. The old well in the back yard shall be his tomb. Now to find him. I suspect he is in my room. What a fool I was not to have burned the wig!"

I heard Mathews start for the stairs.

Here was a rather exciting situation.

I stepped behind the door and drew my automatic.

Peering through the crack of the door, I saw Mathews as he reached the head of the stairs.

In his hand he clutched a dirk-knife, and the man's manner convinced me that he was determined to use it to assure his own safety by taking my life.

Suddenly, as I noticed that Mathews was about my own size, an idea occurred to me.

"I'll give the assassin another evidence of the fact that I have well earned the title of the master of disguises, fate favoring me," I said to myself, and I clubbed my pistol.

The next moment he glided into the room.

I stepped forth, as his back was toward me, and with one blow from the butt of my weapon knocked him senseless at my feet.

Then closing and locking the door, I hurriedly assumed his clothing, perfecting my new disguise by adding a wig and whiskers I had in my pocket.

A glance at the mirror assure me that I could pass for my man, and binding and gagging him, I placed him in the closet containing the clothing, muffled his form in a blanket, and having locked the door, descended to the hall with the key to the room in my pocket.

I met Mrs. Bouvier in the hall, which was not brightly lighted.

"He is done for, and I've locked the door of my room. I am a-going out now. Tell the servants Colonel Darkley has just gone. Later I'll return, and when the servants are in bed, you and I will throw the detective's body into the well," I said hurriedly, in a whisper.

"I'll do as you say, Jason," the woman assented, and I left the house only to return with two officers, whom I stationed in the back yard beside the old well.

I then entered the house, and, accompanied by Mrs. Bouvier, ascended to Jason Mathews' room, and still keeping him muffled in the blanket, so the woman would not recognize him, we carried him downstairs and out to the well.

"Now we need fear no more. You have saved yourself from detection as a thief and ruin and exposure by killing James Mathews, Jason, and the death of this man removes the only detective we fear," said Mrs. Bouvier, exultantly.

At the same moment I threw the blanket from the face of Jason Mathews, and the moonlight fell full upon it.

"My God, what does this mean!" almost screamed the woman, staggering back at this denouement. At the same moment, at a signal from me, the two policemen in waiting sprang forward and seized her.

"It means that Tom Cyphers has won the game and the murderer of James Mathews is detected," I said.

We took both our prisoners to the station at once, and Jason Mathews, it is needless to say, was convicted of his brother's murder, while the woman was also convicted as an accomplice "before the fact," as the lawyers say.

Stanley Dale was saved, and he was ever after my warmest friend.

FORGOT HIS $26,199

WILLIAM GIRTH, of No. 47 Bank Street, Newark, N. J., had a balance of $26,199 on deposit in the Fidelity Trust Company, that city, nine years ago, and forgot about it. Ralph Kutz worked for the bank and noticed the account.

He went to France with the American forces, spent a year in France and returned to his place fourteen months ago. He concluded the owner of the money was dead, and sought to verify his suspicion, but found the depositor at the address in Bank Street.

"Have you got any money?" the police say Kutz asked Girth, and the answer was "No."

Then Kutz, it is charged, related that he could put him in the way of a large sum if he "cut" with him. Girth agreed, and the bank clerk brought three checks to sign, aggregating $10,199. They were drawn on no particular bank. Girth signed the checks, but did not know the reason. Later Kutz tore up the checks in the presence of Girth and made out three new ones. They were drawn on the Fidelity Trust Company. Kutz is said to have indorsed them, collected and then opened an account with another institution.

Meantime, Girth had inquired where "he came in."

"Well," the chief clerk told him, "you had a 'dead' account of $26,199 in the trust company and now you have $16,000 left."

Girth pondered a minute, and then he recollected things. Just nine years ago—the day on which he had made his last deposit—he was seized with a stroke of apoplexy and lost his memory. It never returned to him until the bank clerk had put through his strange business proposition.

The Plot

By PERCY B. ST. JOHN

ONE morning all Moreley was thrilled at the knowledge that a dreadful murder had been committed in their very midst.

Beautiful Grace Langley was found dead in her bed, young, rich, beloved by many.

She was an orphan, and heiress in her own right for fifty thousand dollars. She had no brother or sister, hence the money would go to her cousin, Frank Weston, a wild young fellow, whom her grandfather had hated and disowned.

Suspicion at once turned towards him.

At the inquest he appeared overwhelmed with grief, but answered the coroner's questions unhesitatingly.

"When did you first hear of the murder?"

"This morning. Charles Knobb, the hostler, brought me the word."

"Do you know that Miss Langley had any enemies?"

"I don't think she had a real enemy in the world. The crime was evidently committed for robbery—or because the criminal was detected in the act of stealing."

"What makes you think so?"

"I learned from her bankers only a few minutes ago that she had withdrawn a considerable amount of money from their hands, intending to place it in another bank, but carelessly neglected to do so. I do not know where she kept this money, but her maid told me it could not be found."

"Where were you last night?"

"I attended the opera, and came home about eleven o'clock."

"Did any one see you as you went to your room?"

"Yes—the night clerk. I stopped and spoke a few words to him as I passed."

The night clerk corroborated the above statement.

Miss Langley's maid was next called. She was a pretty, blue-eyed, innocent-looking girl; her eyes were red and swollen with weeping, and she appeared dreadfully frightened.

"When did you first discover that your mistress had been murdered?"

"This morning at seven, the time I go to her room to help to dress her."

"Did you know anything about this money that it is said she withdrew from the bank?"

"Yes; she had about five thousand dollars in banknotes. I told her I was afraid of thieves, but she only laughed, and kept it of nights under her pillow."

"Has it been forthcoming?"

"I cannot find it anywhere."

"Had she an enemy, to your knowledge?"

Silence.

"Will you answer my question?" sharply.

"She thought Mr. Weston an enemy, and frequently spoke to me of his dislike for her. She remarked to me once that she would be afraid to meet him alone on a dark night, and shuddered."

The next witness was one who presented herself.

"I have something to say in the matter," said a sharp voice, as a middle-aged woman pushed herself forward. "I live across the street from the hotel where Mr. Weston boards. My room looks into his. Last night he did come home as he stated, at eleven o'clock, but he went away at twelve."

"How do you know?"

"I know because I had a raging toothache and was up until four. I saw him return a little before four."

"Did anything seem to be wrong as he came home?"

"Nothing, only I noticed he was in a great hurry. He is in the habit of getting jagged, but he did not appear so last night—or rather this morning."

At this point a stranger entered bearing a small tin box.

"If you please, Mr. Coroner, here is a small portion of the missing money. I am a detective from the city—was telegraphed for by Miss Langley's maid, who told me her suspicions. I went to Mr. Weston's room, and under a loose brick in the hearth found the money and this," extending a small knife.

"Murderer! murderer!" was on every lip and in every eye that turned on the pale, horrified face of Frank Weston.

"It is a plot!" he cried. "I see it all now. May Heaven help me to prove my innocence!"

Of course he was arrested and sent to prison, and no one came forward to offer bail, and the tedious months previous to his trial dragged along, and at last the momentous day arrived.

He had not been entirely without friends; a young and rising attorney of the town had been working earnestly for him, and with a faith in the justness of his cause that surprised many.

After the evidence, all so strongly pointing towards Weston's guilt, had been given, a new witness appeared.

A beautiful girl of perhaps eighteen, clad in modest apparel, with a white and yet resolute face.

As she approached, the prisoner started, a sudden color dyed his pale cheek and a new glad fire leaped to his eyes.

"Tell the court your story," said the District Attorney.

"My name is Jennie Clare. I work in Madame Dupont's dressmaking establishment; my wages are meager. I have an invalid mother to support, and sometimes we go to bed hungry. It was at such a time that the serpent came to tempt me in the shape of Dora Wiseman, my cousin, who was then Miss Langley's maid.

"'Do you want to earn one hundred dollars, Jennie?' she asked me.

"'One hundred dollars!' I repeated.

"'Yes, and so easily. Don't speak so loud—but I have a wealthy friend who desires to compromise a wild young fellow. But you must promise the utmost secrecy, and I'll explain.'

"I thought of my half-starved mother, and—and I listened to her story—it was plausible enough and of a trifling nature; Heaven knows how little I dreamed of the fearful work she had in contemplation. I offer no excuse for my conduct, except my great need; I acknowledge its weakness and folly. I had frequently met Mr. Weston in the street and knew that he had noticed me particularly, although he had never dared to address me. I sent him a note the night of the murder, dictated by my cousin Dora, to the effect that my mother was dying, that I had no other friend, and would he come to me at once?

"He came; I met him at the door, and confusedly drew him into our poor room, where my mother was ill, though by no means dying. I found him to be a gentleman and that his admiration for me had been honest.

"When he parted from me at our door that morning I was his betrothed wife.

"That is all, except that Dora brought me the one hundred dollars promised, and revealed the tool I had been in her hands, threatening to implicate me if I dare tell.

"He was not to be allowed to prove an alibi. I wept bitterly, my heart was crushed with remorse, and I resolved to reveal all at any cost. My mother will corroborate my statement."

Then the young attorney arose and said:

"Your Honor, it was all a vile plot, as my client said on the day of the inquest. A plot of Dora Wiseman and her lover, Charles Knobb, the hostler; they resolved to steal the money and implicate Weston, as they did. But their crime has found them out, and my client's entire innocence is proven."

The two real murderers received a life sentence, and are now in the State prison.

Frank Weston, made wiser by the ordeal through which he had passed, became a nobler, truer man and one who believed in and practiced total abstinence. He lives in the old Langley home, honored and respected by all, and adored by his beautiful young wife, who was once Jennie Clare.

GREATEST OF VOLCANOES

IN the island of Savaii, in the Samoan group, during an August night in the year 1905, there arose from the midst of a peaceful cocoa plantation a volcano that in four years of its still ceaseless activity has sent forth more molten lava than has any volcano of which there is record.

To-day this flow of lava, in some places 700 feet in depth, is filling up the sea along a frontage of more than seven miles, has destroyed about fifty villages and as many square miles of what was once the most productive area in all Samoa. From Apia, about fifty miles away on the island of Upolo, it is sometimes possible to read at night by the glare of the Savaiian volcano, whose twin pillars of vapor by day become columns of red.

Above the ever-seething lake of fire within the crater hangs a great crimson cloud, while eight miles distant from the volcanic cone appears a lesser cloud, sometimes divided into many columns of apparent fire. It is but the steam arising from the sea, colored by the red glowing lava that pours a Niagara of fire over the cliffs that the ceaseless torrent of molten rock builds higher and higher every day. The ocean steamers touching at Apia pass within close hailing distance of this dramatic spectacle.

Scientists who have seen the most recent flow say that every minute 300,000 tons of lava flow over the lower rim of the crater; and this not resembling in any way the other lava, but like molten iron spreads over the old field and beyond, until at the sea there is a Niagara of fire full ten miles in width. As this molten lava falls into the ocean, says Harper's Weekly, it turns to fine black sand and sinks, and so a new coast line is being built up in water 300 to 400 feet deep.

This moving molten lake advances at the rate of four miles an hour. As it pours itself into the sea columns of water are raised in steam to incalculable heights, and this, descending in a fine rain of brine, destroys vegetation and corrodes the galvanized iron roofings of churches and trading stations for miles around.

As the torrents of boiling lava break against the basalt cliffs or hummocks left by the old flow cliffs are melted by the heat, hummocks disintegrated and carried forward by the flow to be hurled into the sea, where they explode like titanic bombs, and this is taking place every moment along an ever-widening sea front of ten miles at least. For more than a mile out in the ocean the water boils, and from the crater still flows a steady stream of lava greater, it is said, than many has ever seen in the past issue from any volcano of which there is record.

The Meaning Of Dreams

INCANTATIONS, CHARMS AND SPELLS

(*Continued from No.* 77)

Bride Cakes

A slice of the bride-cake thrice thrown through the wedding-ring and laid under the head of an unmarried woman will make her dream of her future husband. The same is practiced in the north with a piece of the groaning cheese.

Another way to see a future spouse in a dream: the party inquiring must lie in a different county from that in which she commonly resides, and on going to bed must knit the left garter about the right-legged stocking, letting the other garter and stocking alone; and as you rehearse the following verse, at every comma knit a knot:

This knot I knit to know the thing I know not yet,
That I may see the man that shall my husband be;

How he goes, and what he wears,
And what he does all days and years.

Accordingly in a dream he will appear, with the insignia of his trade and profession.

Another, performed by charming the moon, thus: at the first appearance of the new moon, immediately after new-year day, go out in the evening, and stand over the spears of a gate or stile, and looking on the moon, repeat the following lines:

All hail to thee, moon! all hail to thee!
I pr'thee good moon, reveal to me
This night whom my husband must be!

The party will then dream of her future husband.

A spell, to be Used at any Convenient Time

Take a nosegay of various colored flowers, one of a sort; a sprig of rue and some yarrow of a grave, and bind them all together with the hair of your head; sprinkle them with a few drops of the oil of amber, using your left hand, and bind the flowers round our head when you retire to rest under your night cap; and put on clean sheets and linen, and your future fate will appear to you in your dream.

Promise of Marriage

If you receive a written one, or any declaration to that effect in a letter, prick the words with a sharp-pointed needle on a sheet of paper quite clear from any writing; fold it in nine folds and place it under your head when you retire to rest. If you dream of diamonds, castles, or even a clear sky, there is no deceit, and you will prosper; trees in blossom, or flowers, show children; washing or graves, show you will lose them by death; and water shows they are faithful, but that you will go through severe poverty with the party for some time, though all may end well.

Strange Bed.

Lay under your pillow a prayer-book, opened at the matrimonial service, bound round with the garters you wore that day, and a sprig of myrtle on the page that says *with this ring I thee wed*, and your dream will be ominous, and you will have your fortune as well told as if you had paid a crown to an astrologer.

Acorns.

This is to be tied on the third day of the month between September and March. Let any number of young women, not exceeding nine, and minding that there is an odd one in the company assembled together, and each string nine acorns on a separate string, or as many acorns as there are females in company, but not more; wrap them round a long strip of wood, and place it in the fire, just as the clock strikes twelve at night; say not a word, but sit round the fire till all the acorns are consumed, then rake out the ashes, and retire to bed almost directly, repeating—

May love and marriage be the theme,
To visit me in this night's dream;
Gentle Venus, be my friend,
The image of my lover send;
Let me see his form and face,
And his occupation trace;
By a symbol or a sign,
Cupid, forward my design.

The Three Keys.

Purchase three small keys, each at a different place, and going to bed tie them together with your garter, and place them on your left hand glove, along with a small flat dough cake, on which you have pricked the first letters of your sweetheart's name; put them in your bosom when you retire to rest; if you are to have that young man you will dream of him, but not else.

This charm is the most effectual on the first or third of a new moon.

Current News

ANCIENT CHINESE POTTERY AS AN INDUSTRY

An authority on Chinese porcelain is responsible for the statement that it would be possible to produce such work to-day at the King Ta-chan potteries as in the days of Kang Hsi, although the cost would be practically prohibitive, and the coloring could not be duplicated, as the mineral coloring matter used is dug from mines in which the chemical components vary with the depth. It is said that the old molds, patterns, and designs are still in existence, and that clay such as was used for the old ware is obtainable.

HIGHEST TELEPHONE SYSTEM IN THE WORLD

According to the Telephone Engineer, G. D. E. Mortimer, a mining engineer of Point Loma, Cal., claims to have the highest telephone system in the world, the installation being at an altitude of 15,500 feet above sea level. This telephone system is located at Sonata, Bolivia, South America, where the installation of a telephone system for a certain mining company, between various parts of the mine and the town of Yani, has just been completed. The total length of the line is ten and one-half miles, the installation being at an altitude of 15,500 feet.

BEGGED DIME, HAD $1,600.69

Patrolman Lovett heard a plaintive appeal at his elbow at Hicks and Congress streets, Brooklyn, N. Y., the other day, and turned to find a ragged supplicant begging 10 cents for something to eat. The officer put his hand in his pocket, and then decided to make sure about the solicitor. He took the man to the Amity street station, where, acording to Lovett, a search revealed 69 cents in cash and $1,600 worth of War Savings certificates.

The man gave his name as John A. Carlson, 60 years old, no home. Magistrate Walsh in Adams Street Court held him pending further investigation.

KEEP SWINDLERS OUT OF YOUR CONFIDENCE

The time to stop a dealer in fake stocks is before he gets your savings, not afterwards, according to James A. Davis, manager of the Advertisers and Investors Protective Bureau of the Chicago Association of Commerce. "In criminal law," he says, "the policeman does not wait until the burglar has entered your house and emerged with your household goods before he arrests the invader. The policeman stops him in the act of entering. A stock jobber who tries to sell you fraudulent stock by misleading statements is attempting to force an entry into your confidence, like the burglar to your house."

In the first year of its existence, the protective bureau of the Chicago Association of Commerce has driven from Illinois more than $120,000,000 worth of fraudulent securities, according to Mr. Davis.

"No richer harvest ever was offered the stock jobber than at the present time," he continued. "It is safe to estimate that at this very moment there are more than $1,000,000,000 worth of wildcat 'investments' being offered to the public in this country. The United States leads the rest of the world combined in the amount of money lost annually in financial swindles."

Mr. Davis urged the adoption of a Federal law which would require every promoter which publishes statements at all visionary or misleading to prove his statements. A State law, he said, did not go to the root of the trouble, as they do not come into operation until after large sums may have been lost by ignorant investors.

Exercise of the principles of sound and safe investment are equally efficient in forestalling the advances of confidence men. If the money of investors is safely placed in sound, profitable Government securities they will not have to appeal to the law to recover losses suffered through false promises of stock fakers.

AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY

Ten years ago, Dec. 12, 1910, Dorothy Arnold disappeared. The mystery of her disappearance is as great as when it was first made known.

Dec. 12, 1910, Dorothy Harriette, daughter of Francis R. Arnold, a wealthy importer, kissed her mother good-by at her home, No. 108 East 79th Street, and went upon a shopping trip, naming Fifth Avenue stores she would visit. She told her mother she would telephone when she found something suitable. She neither visited the stores nor telephoned. She was last seen at Fifth Avenue and 30th Street that Monday afternoon about 3 o'clock.

Jan. 25, 1911, Second Deputy Police Commissioner Flynn, in charge of the Detective Bureau, announced the girl was missing.

Jan. 26, 1911, $1,000 reward was offered by her father. Search the police had been making became nation-wide, and eventually embraced the world. Photographs and descriptions were sent broadcast. It has been estimated that the Arnold family spent $35,000, the newspapers $50,000, and the police $15,000 in the search.

April 19 the Arnold family announced they had given up hope, although rumors and clues have been investigated from time to time in the following years.

AN ADHESIVE FROM SNAILS

Many of the larger kinds of snails have at the extremity of their bodies small white bladders filled with a gelatinous substance. It has been discovered that this is the strongest adhesive known for the repairing of porcelain, glass, etc. The substance is applied thinly to both sides of the fracture and the broken piece is tied firmly together so that all is held in place. A rather longer time for drying should be given than in the case of ordinary adhesives so as to allow the natural glue to acquire the greatest degree of strength. When it is once really set the tenacity of this remarkable adhesive is astonishing.

MYSTERY OF THE EEL

That familiar article of diet, the eel, is one of the unsolved puzzles of animal life. An important scientist has set out to seek the clue to the eel's secret. Writing in "Science" on the many unknown things of oceanography, Prof. A. G. Boving has this to say:

"Take the case of our common fresh-water eel as an example of how little we know and at the same time of how much has been discovered. All the eels of our streams and lakes of northwestern Europe live and feed and grow under our eyes without reproducing their kind—no spawning eel has ever been seen. After living for years in immaturity, at last near the end of their lives the large male and female yellow eels undergo a change in appearance and in nature.

"From all the fresh waters they migrate in the autumn to the coast, from all the inshore seas to the open ocean and still eastward and south to the mid-Atlantic, and we know not how much further—for the exact locality and manner of spawning has still to be discovered. The youngest known stages of the Leptocephalus, the larval stage of eels, have been found by the Dane, Dr. Johannes Schmidt, to the west of the Azores where the water is over 2,000 fathoms in depth. These were about one-third of an inch in length and were probably not long hatched.

"I cannot now refer to all the able investigators —Grasso, Hjort and others—who have discovered and traced the stages of growth of the Leptocephalus and its metamorphosis into the 'elvers' or young eels which are carried by the North Atlantic drift back to the coasts of Europe and ascend our rivers in spring in countless myriads, but no man has been more indefatigable and successful in the quest than Dr. Schmidt, who in the various expeditions of the Danish investigation steamer Thor from 1904 onward found successively younger and younger stages, and who is during the present summer engaged in a traverse of the Atlantic to the West Indies in the hope of finding the missing link in the chain, the actual spawning fresh-water eel in the intermediate waters somewhere above the abysses of the open ocean."

THE AGE OF MATURITY

It has generally been supposed that among the peoples of the earth the age of maturity comes earliest in the tropics, and increases gradually as one goes northward through the temperate and eventually into the Polar zone. It has been presumed that a similar condition would be found in going south from the equator toward the Southern pole.

If the age of maturity increases with fair regularity as one goes north through Europe from Sicily to Lapland, it would seem reasonable that this has a direct connection with the decrease in temperature, and the assumption has accordingly been generally made. But in North America this rule, if it be a rule, has a striking exception, writes Vilhjalmur Stefansson in the Journal of the American Medical Association. It is not rare among Eskimo women that they have their first child at the age of twelve; and children born before the mothers were eleven have been recorded in places where the age of the mother can be in no doubt, because of the fact that her birth had been recorded by a resident missionary.

It is a curious thing that during twelve years of association with the Eskimos, during which time I have spoken and written a great deal about their manner of life, it never occurred to me until some two or three months ago that their early maturity is strictly in accord with the supposition that the hotter the environment the earlier the maturity.

For to all intents and purposes the typical Eskimo in the country known to me lives under tropical or subtropical conditions. During the winter of 1906-1907 I recorded the estimate that the savage temperature within doors of the Eskimo house in which I lived at the mouth of the Mackenzie River was a good deal above 80 F., and frequently rose to 90 F. From the point of view of those who spent most of the winter indoors in that house it was a matter of no consequence that the temperature was perhaps 40 or 50 degrees below zero outdoors, when the outdoor air seldom came in contact with their bodies. Even when they go out this cold air does not have a chance to come in contact with the body, except for the limited area of the face.

When an Eskimo is well dressed his two layers of fur clothing imprison the body heat so effectively that the air in actual contact with his skin is always at the temperature of a tropical summer. It is true, therefore, that while an Eskimo is indoors his entire body is exposed to a local climate as warm as that of Sicily, and when he is outdoors he carries that climate about with him inside his clothes and applicable to 90 or 95 per cent. of his body area.

Mr. Stefansson says that the Indians have no such means of protection from the cold, and that therefore the more northerly of these matur late.

BOY OF 12 A PRODIGY

Edward Rochie Hardy, Jr., twelve years old, son of Prof. and Mrs. Edward R. Hardy of No. 418 West 118th street, New York, who is attending Columbia University, is the youngest freshman to matriculate at an American college since William J. Sidis entered Tufts in 1909 at the age of ten and the youngest ever admitted to Columbia.

Among Edward's antecedents were a college president and a New England Governor. His father is a professor at New York University, and his mother has taken three degrees. Harvard made a bid for Edward, and Prof. Hardy favored Harvard, while Mrs. Hardy preferred New York University. Edward himself decided on Columbia.

The boy entered school at three, and at eight was in high school, from which he was graduated at eleven. He speaks twelve languages and is going to learn Chinese next. Notwithstanding his achievements, he is a regular American boy, who likes to talk batting averages and play the usual strenuous games. He weighs 143 pounds, is five feet three inches in height, and never studies at night. He has never been sick.

In spite of the fact that Edward speaks almost all the languages there are and can lecture learnedly on the fourth dimension and similar abstruse subjects, he is a wholesome American boy with a fondness for the game of marbles when played for keeps.

He entered the university with a rating of second place in the efficiency examination and with fourteen points advanced credit; he reads Babylonian tablets; he made three points in Assyrian; he matriculated at New York University in the summer garden class at the age of five.

The prodigy has never been ill in his life. It was nothing of a tax on his mentality to take fourth, fifth and sixth grades in high school in one year and to lump the seventh, eighth and ninth in the same way. He has already been picked as a subject for a school of journalism thesis.

PHANTOM SHIPS

The coast of New England has many legends concerning spectre ships firmly believed by the rugged fishermen, who assert stoutly that on various occasions glimpses of the shadowy craft have been seen, followed invariably by disaster.

The spectre of the Palentine is occasionally seen on the Sound, and is the forerunner of a gale. She was a Dutch trading vessel and was wrecked off Block Island in 1752. The wreckers, it is said, made short work of her, stripping her fore and aft and setting fire to the hull.

As she drifted blazing off the coast a human form was visible amid the flames, the form of a woman passenger, left to perish on the doomed craft. Since, and generally upon the anniversary of the wreck, a phantom ship with blazing hull, charred spars and scorched sail and rigging has been cruising off Block Island.

In the seventeenth century a ship was about to sail from Salem, Mass., to England. Her cargo was on board, sails bent and passengers on deck when two strangers came hurriedly on board and engaged passage. The couple were a young man and a young woman, who tradition records, were remarkable for their bearing and beauty.

Who they were or whence they came no one in Salem Town could tell. The ship being detained by adverse winds, the mysterious couple excited the suspicions of the townspeople, who viewed them as uncanny and prophesied disaster to the vessel if they were allowed to sail on her. But the master, a gruff and stern sailor, refused to listen, and finally departed on a Friday.

The vessel never reached her destination and was never spoken, but later in the year incoming vessels reported sighting a craft with luminous rigging and sails and shining hull and spars. She was sailing with all canvas set against the wind, with a crew of dead men standing in the shrouds and leaning over the rail, while on the quarter deck stood a young and beautiful couple.

It is said that the French fishermen from the Magdalen Islands and the matter of fact Yankee skippers of Bangor, Me., alike shun the shores of Bay Chaleur after dark and refuse to put in at Dead Man's Cove under any circumstances, preferring to run the risk of foundering in a hurricane in the open sea to sharing the shelter of the cove with the phantom ship.

The inhabitants of St. Pierre tell of a smack on a herring trip that found herself right in the track of the phantom ship. Captain and crew had heard of the ghostly vessel, but scoffed at it, and when they saw her loom up in the twilight straight ahead they thought a collision imminent and the startled steersman put the helm over. The sea wraith swept down upon them, and in the space of a breath had passed right through them and was racing madly astern in the direction of Dead Man's Cove.

Another story is that of a smack from St. Pierre which saw the phantom anchored just inside the cove at sunset. A small boat filled with men was making trips between the gray ship and the beach, at each trip uploading boxes and barrels, which other men waiting ashore buried in the sand. The captain did not wait to see whether they were interring dead men or chests of treasure, but got away from the place as fast as he could.

Old sailors along the Maine coast firmly believe that the phantom ship is an old merchantman that went down with all on board trying to reach the cove in a great storm in 1784; but at St. Pierre the fishermen will tell you that it is a pirate haunting the spot where the buccaneer crew hid the treasure for which they lost their souls.

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BUDDHIST TREASURES SHOWN

Daigoji, the head temple of the One school of the Shingon sect of Buddhism in Japan, situated not far from Kyoto, in the Uji district, suggests by its name its relation to Emperor Daigo, who reigned from 898 to 920. Its name originated from the fact that its founder, Abbot Shoho, came to this village and exclaimed after he drank from an old farmer's spring: "The water was as good as daigo!" It is a Buddhist word meaning an unctuous rich liquor. The posthumous title of the emperor must have originated from his devotion to the temple and its founder, as well as from his burial in the temple grounds.

Rare specimens of Buddhist art and literature, carefully preserved as the temple treasures of Daigoji, and exhibited recently at Tokio through the efforts of Dr. Katsumi Koroita, of the editorial staff of historiographical materials in Tokio Imperial University, bring the story of the temple down to 300 years ago. Among the peculiar paintings in the temple are "flower viewing screens," pictures of horse training and a collection of fan paintings said to be rare treasures.

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No, the atmosphere surrounding the earth moves right along with the earth on its axis. If it were not so, the earth would probably burn up—at least no living thing could remain on it—since the friction of the earth would develop such a heat that nothing could live in it.—The Book of Wonders.

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